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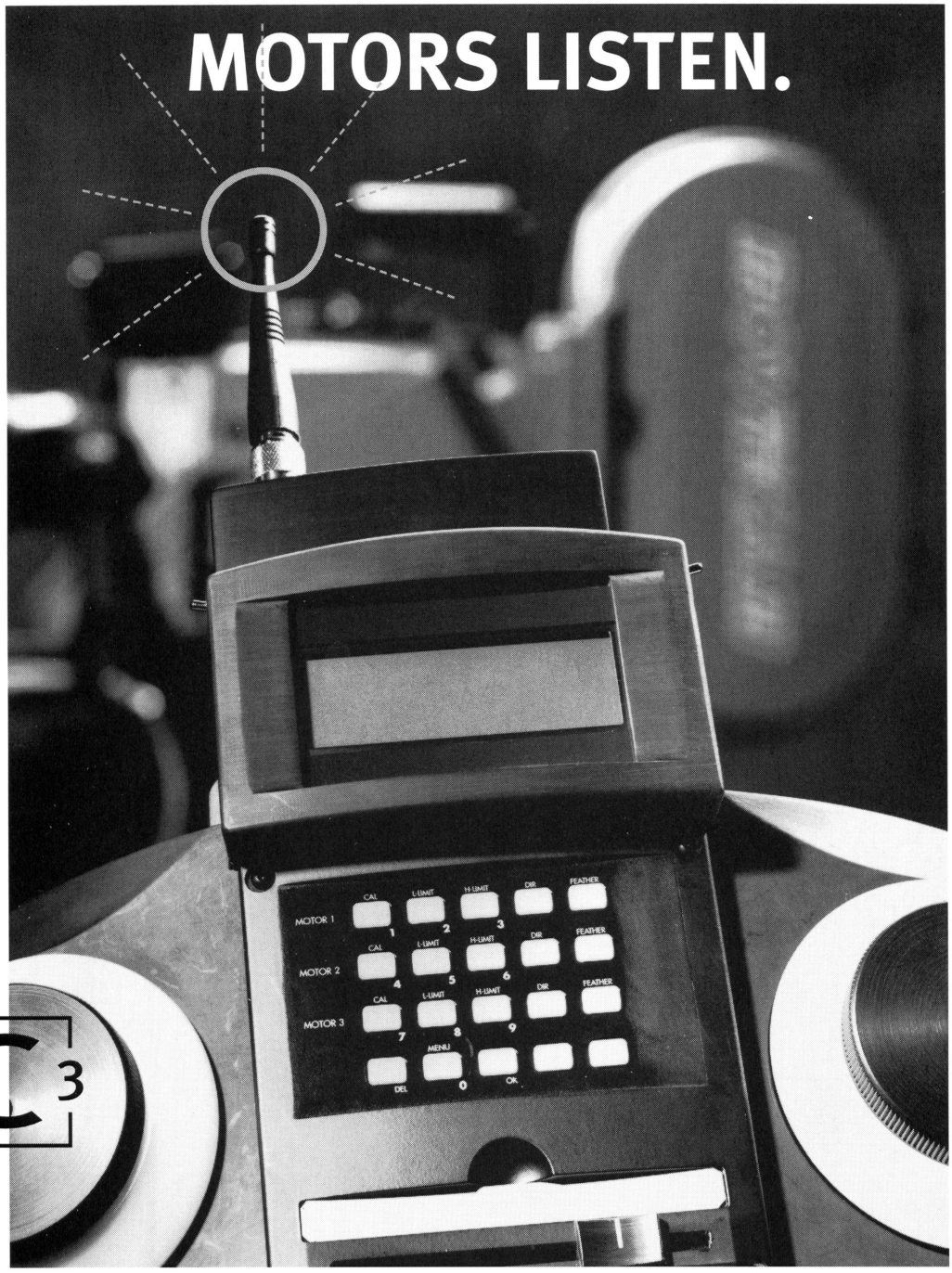

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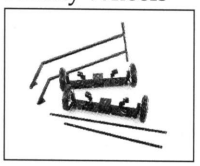
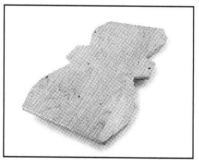
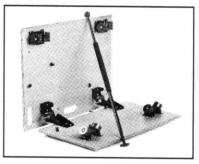


Wonk Board



Sawed Board



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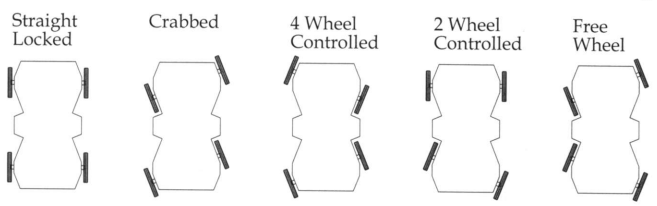

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The International Journal of Film and Electronic Production Techniques

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On Our Cover: Bum luck and a balky car conspire to strand drifter Bobby Cooper (Sean Penn) in a town called trouble in *U-Turn,* directed by Oliver Stone and photographed by Robert Richardson, ASC (photo by Zade Rosenthal, courtesy of Sony Tri-Star and Phoenix Pictures).

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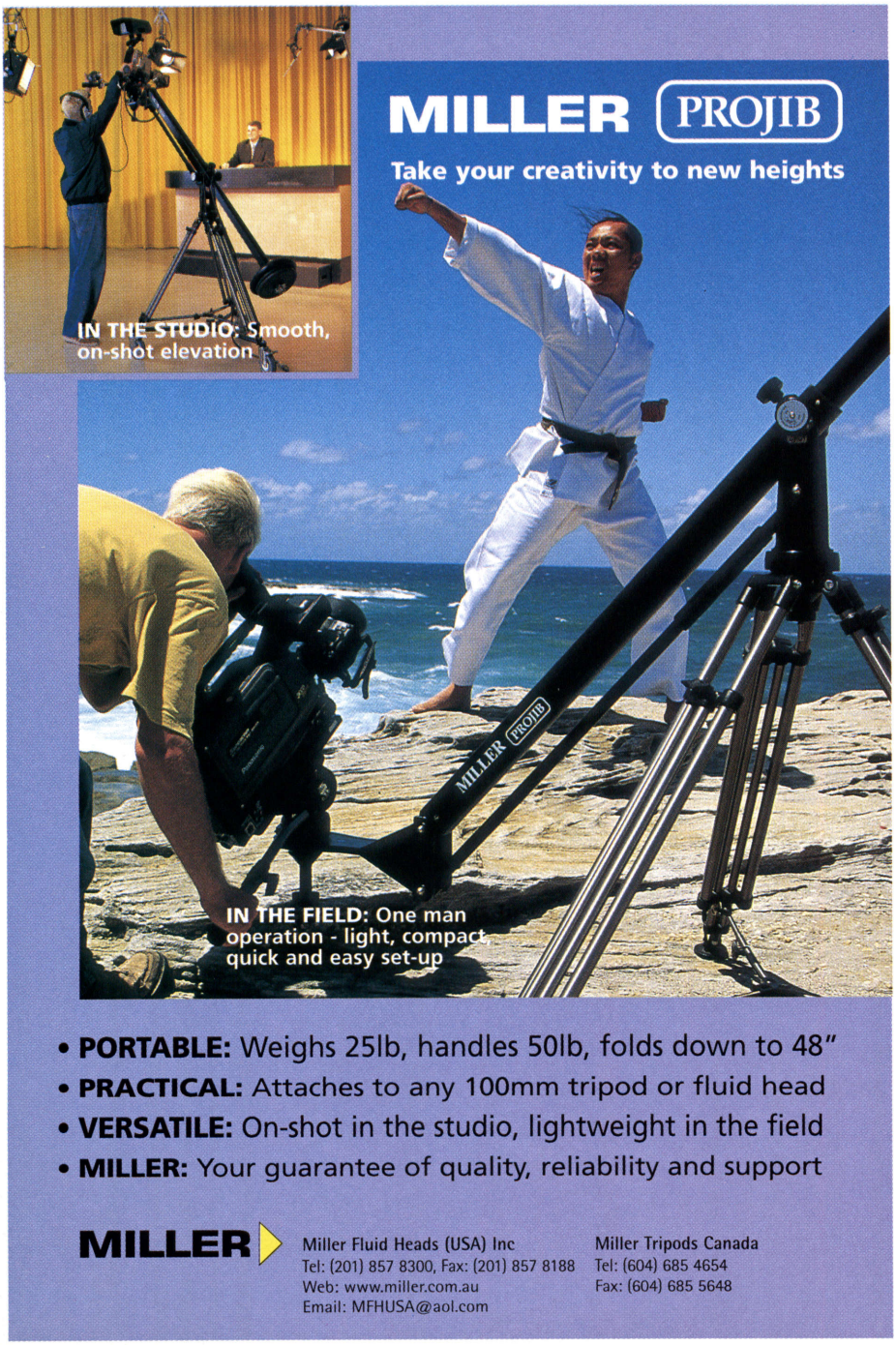
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October 1997 Vol. 78, No. 10

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American **Cinematographer** (ISSN 0002-7928) established 1920 in 78th year of publication is published monthly in Hollywood by ASC Holding Corp., 1782 N. Orange Dr., Hollywood, CA 90028, U.S.A., 1-800-448-0145, 213-969-4333, Fax 213-876-4973. **Subscriptions:** U.S. $40; Canada/Mexico $60; all other foreign countries $75 a year (remit international Money Order or other exchange payable in U.S. $). **Advertising:** Rate card upon request from Hollywood Office. For **East Coast & Midwest sales (203) 761-9804, FAX (203) 761-0090, 387 Danbury Rd., Wilton, CT 06897.**

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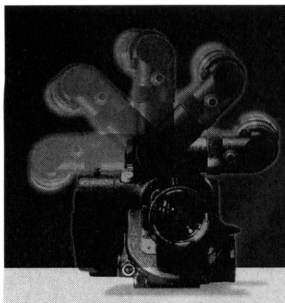

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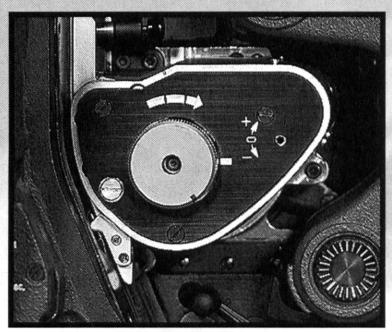

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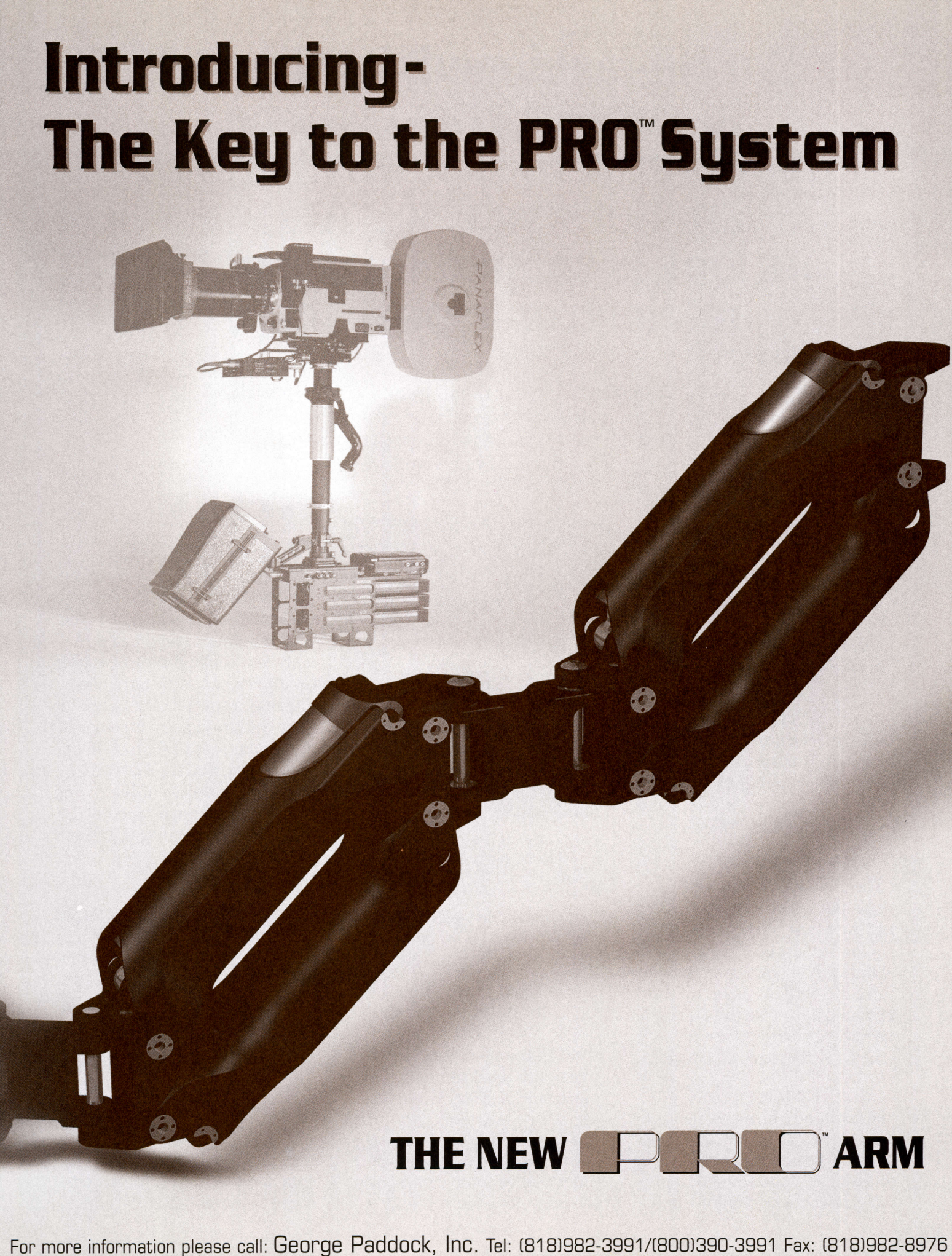

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"An old-fashioned, low-impact, in-camera effect can be more fun and cost less," says DP Tom Burstyn CSC, "And its look is shaped by me, not by an electronic post shop."

Shooting a day-for-night dream sequence using a partial-mirror rig and two aligned cameras – one with color, one with infra-red black-and-white:

"Working on night-for-night scenes that were a pain to light well, I have sometimes thought: If this were in black-and-white, it could easily be shot day-for-night."

Unreal color

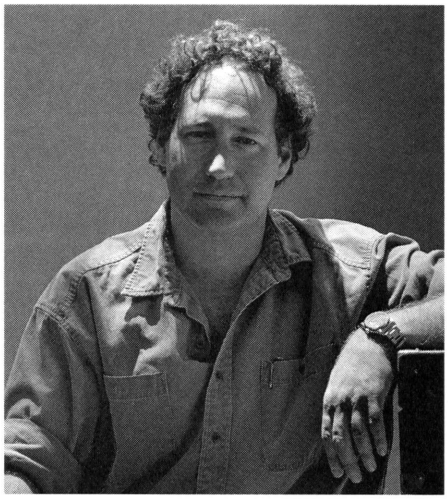
"It's the color that makes day-for-night look unreal, of course," says Tom Burstyn, "But you need *some* color in a night scene – even though people see less and less color the darker it gets."

Try it out?

"The night exterior dream sequence in *Crazy Horse* gave me the chance to try out one of my low-impact effects. How about shooting it in both color and infra-red with two lined-up cameras and marrying the footage on an optical printer? John Irvin (the Director) agreed to try it."

Photography

"With filtered infra-red, the daytime sky would be almost black and skin would glow without a diffusion filter. It would be a *photographic* effect, on film – one that you couldn't get in electronic post. Or, if you *could* get it, the cost would be stupendous."



Tom Burstyn: Money replacing imagination?

Just shoot it day-for-night and leave the rest to us

"And it's not just the cost. On a previous job, I remember an electronic post guy telling me (in a dismissve tone): *Just shoot it day-for-night and leave the rest to us.* That bothered me. I like to have some control over the images on the screen."

Imagination vs. Cost

"An electronic post effect can be spectacular, but doing it in the camera makes it look part of the photographed story. The excellent New Zealand film *Heavenly Creatures* had some outlandish in-camera special effects. Some were almost clumsy, but they all worked perfectly *because they were imaginative.* You were meant to be aware of them; and the audience happily accepted them as part of the movie."

Interested

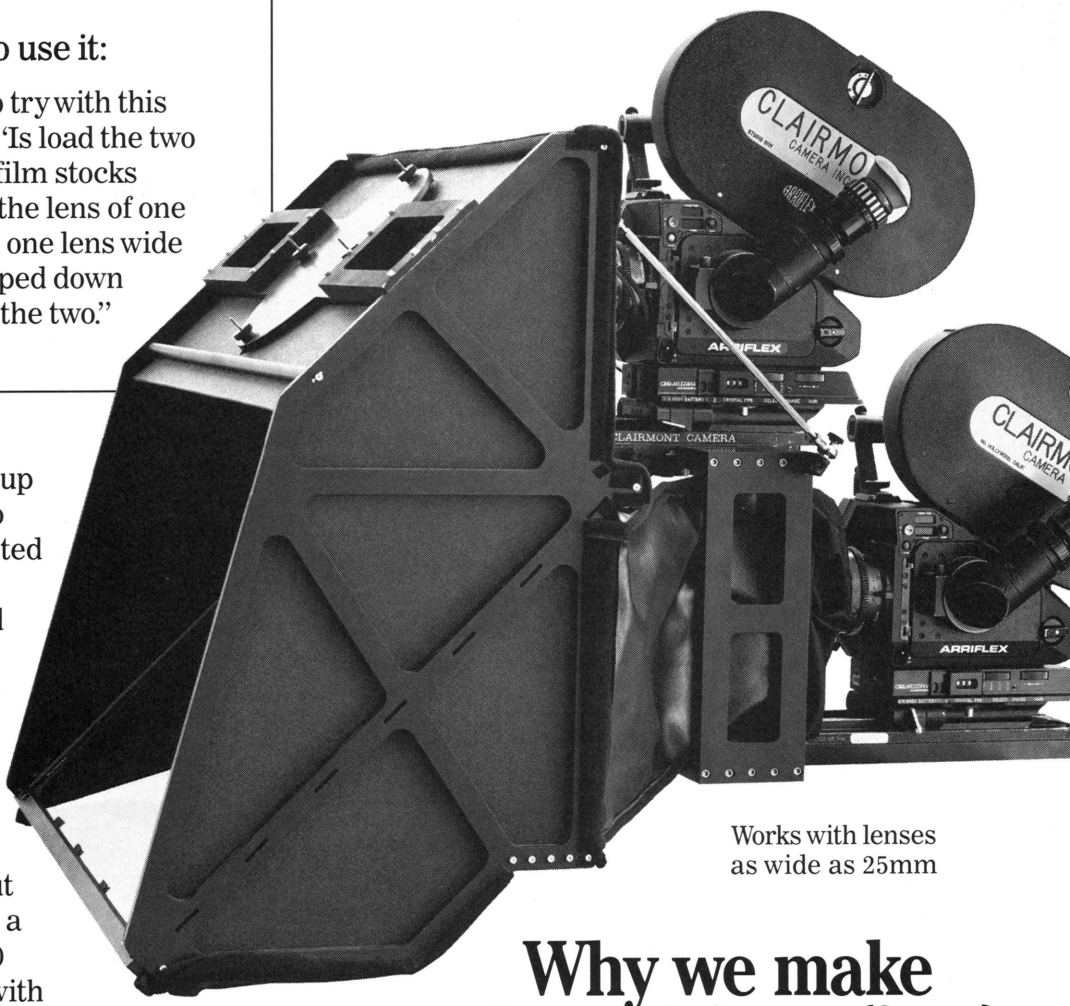
"When I took the two-camera idea to Clairmont, Denny and the others just jumped on board! They were immediately interested in something new and untried, and how to make it work. By the time the *Crazy Horse* producers had agreed to the infra-red idea, there was less than a month to go, so the prototype rig had to work right first time."

150 foot rolls

"Luckily, it did, so we quickly shot some tests. The infra-red came in 150 foot rolls! We had

Another way to use it:

"Another thing I'd like to try with this rig," says Tom Burstyn, "Is load the two cameras with identical film stocks and put an ND filter on the lens of one camera only. Shoot with one lens wide open and the other stopped down – and dissolve between the two."



Works with lenses as wide as 25mm

gone looking for a lab still set up to develop black-and-white (to various gammas) and interested in messing with those short lengths. Luckily, we had found one: Foto-Kem."

20 minute setup

"With its 20x30 inch partial mirror, the Over/Under rig weighed about 45 lbs (without cameras), so it was fairly easy to put on a gearhead. But aligning the two images with a crosshair target took about 20 minutes for each setup. And with the 150 foot lengths, almost every other take was a reload."

Heat sensitive

"First AC Jeff Clark had his hands full. We were on location in Hot Springs, N. Dakota, with temps sometimes over 100 degrees. Infra-red is very heat-sensitive – we got exposure stripes at the head end where the film had been resting on rollers inside the magazine. Jeff had ice coolers full of magazines with 150 foot loads in them!"

Taking a chance

"In the end, though, the rig worked out really well," says Mr. Burstyn. "The footage had an antique look, which was appropriate – *Crazy Horse* was a period piece. You're taking a chance when you try things like this. It's great to have the Clairmonts take a chance with you."

Why we make these things (free) and how this one works:

Tom Burstyn

His recent Feature Film DP credits include City Of Industry, Lotus Eaters, Andre and Magic In The Water. His TV Movie/Series DP credits include Crazy Horse, Foxfire and The Hitchhiker. Among his awards are a CSC Cinematography Award and the 1996 Genie Award for Best Cinematography.

Tom Burstyn came to us with the Over/Under idea and we designed and built it free of charge. We then rented it to him and added it to our rental inventory.

We have dozens of custom tools made this way. The more of them we have, the more useful we are to innovative film makers (which most of our clients are) — so we get more rental jobs from them. We also have fun making things and seeing the results on screen.

The lower camera shoots through a partial mirror. The upper camera shoots an image reflected off the front of that mirror, via another mirror. The second mirror gives a finder image that is correctly oriented. The Over/Under works with any production camera.

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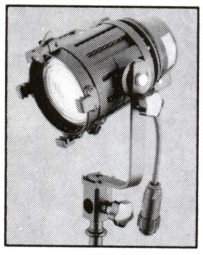

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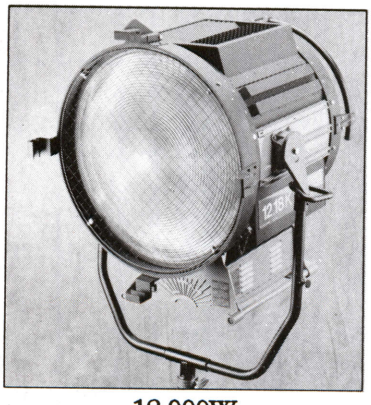

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Letters

Showbiz Slip-Up

The 1997 Showbiz Expo Highlight in the "New Products" section of the August issue contains incorrect information in the piece titled "Clairmont Offers Vision III Imaging's MOE Lens." The article erroneously states that V3 images require viewing glasses and special equipment. In fact, the beauty of the V3 MOE lenses is that their images are fully compatible with standard 35mm projection and do **not** require viewing glasses or special equipment. In addition, V3 images can be transferred to video tape and broadcast to the home the same as normal video. The V3 MOE lenses create motion picture images with enhanced texture, depth and a strong sense of presence. The misinformation stating that the MOE lenses require glasses and special equipment in such a well-read publication as *American Cinematographer* could deter potential clients from inquiring about the MOE lenses.

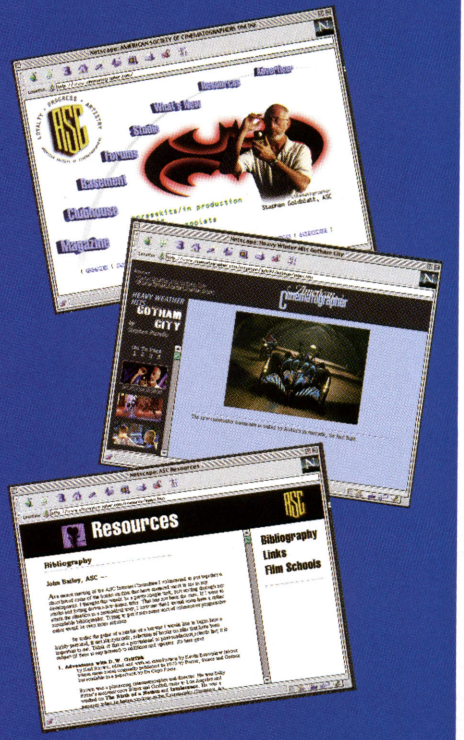
— Chris Mayhew, President
Vision III Imaging, Inc.
Herndon, Virginia

What's New this month at www.cinematographer.com:

E-mail questions to Dante Spinotti, AIC about his rethinking of noir cinematography in ***L.A. Confidential.***

Plus web-exclusive articles with:

- Robert Fraisse, cinematographer, and Jean-Jacques Annaud, director, of ***Seven Years in Tibet*** discussing the shoot in Argentina and Canada.
- Amy Vincent, cinematographer, and Kais Lemmons, director, tell of shooting ***Eve's Bayou*** in Louisiana.



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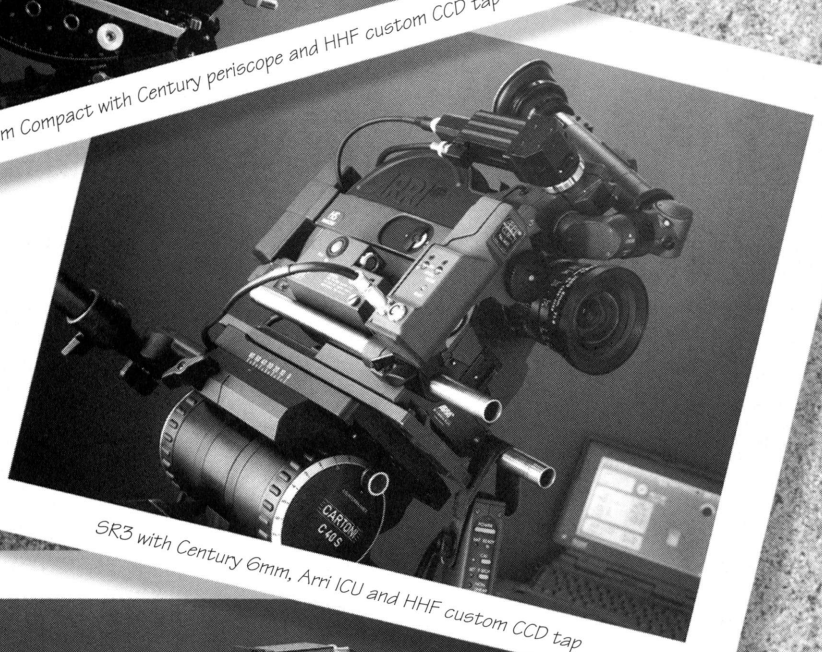

SR3 with Century 6mm, Arri ICU and HHF custom CCD tap

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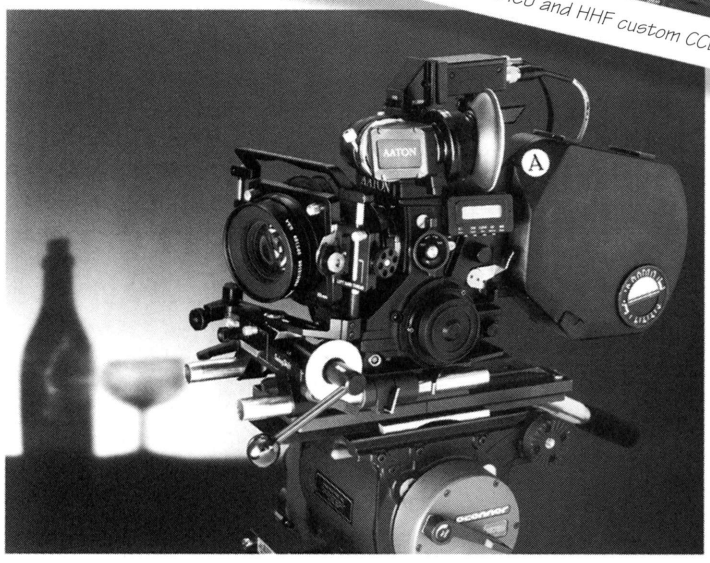

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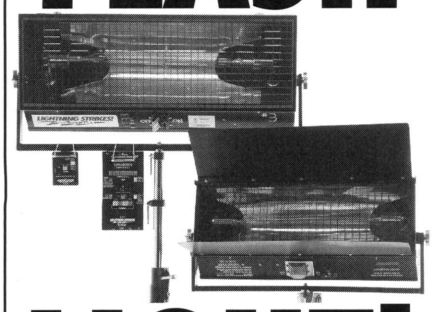

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Webcasting: The Next Broadcast Networks?

by Frank Beacham

Seemingly out of nowhere, webcasting — the broadcast of real-time digital audio and video over the Internet — has exploded through cyberspace. In the past year alone, the number of audio webcasters jumped from 72 to 630, an increase of 775 percent. Video webcasting has taken off only in the past few months, even though the technical quality for most Internet users with dial-up connections remains relatively primitive. Image quality is expected to improve dramatically within a short span of time.

The new technology is incredibly appealing. Webcasting is the cheapest, most powerful medium ever available to those who want their programs to reach a large audience without having to deal with the powers that be. With webcasting, there's no FCC, no censorship (yet) and no corporate gatekeepers creating boundaries around programming. For now, it's truly a personal broadcasting medium without limits.

Much of the recent heat — and promise — of webcasting is being generated by Microsoft. The computer giant recently made several high-profile deals that are eventually expected to create a universal, multimedia broadcast standard for the Internet. "We believe that the Internet will become the next broadcast network," says Jim Durkin, product manager of Microsoft's NetShow, the computer maker's Internet audio/video streaming technology.

The increased interest in webcasting began over the summer, when Microsoft announced a licensing agreement and minority investment in Progressive Networks, the inventors of the RealAudio and RealVideo streaming media technologies. Next came word that Microsoft would purchase VXtreme, another key multimedia player on the Net. In the wake of these developments, a flurry of other dominos began to fall.

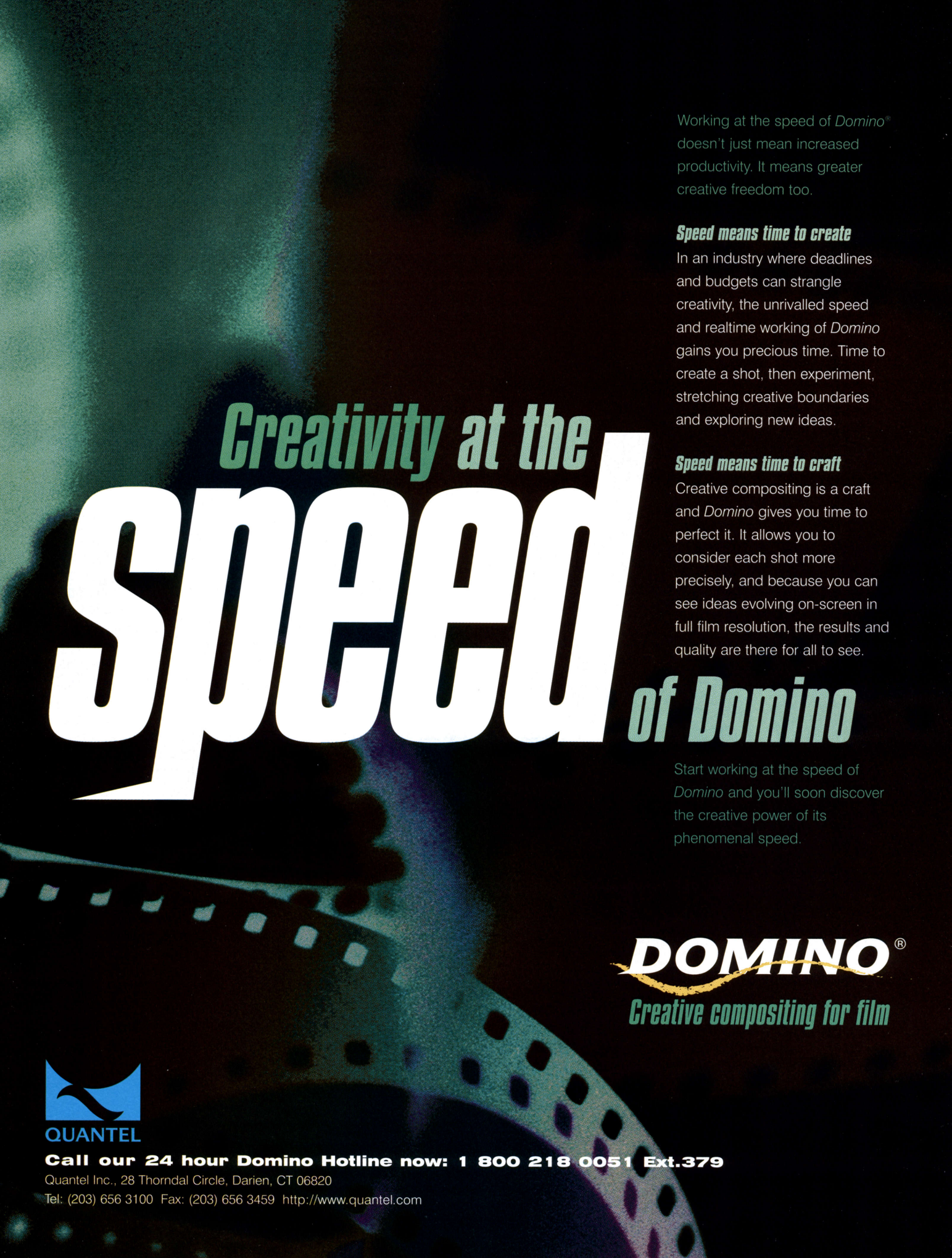
The bottom line is that the Internet is soon expected to become as easy to use as a radio or TV set. Ultimately, a user will simply flip the computer "dial" to the program of choice. The days of fumbling with various proprietary players and plug-ins is coming to an end.

Experts say tomorrow's Internet (meaning a mere few years down the road) will have little resemblance to the slow, cranky network of today. With the dramatically increased bandwidth that is on the horizon, users will be able to multicast audio and video programs to millions of viewers simultaneously around the globe.

"Things are changing very, very fast," says Patrick Seaman, chief technology officer of AudioNet, a major webcaster that now re-transmits the feeds of over 250 radio and television stations. "We are negotiating [multicast] agreements now. By the end of the year, we'll reach at least 500,000 [Internet users] simultaneously via multicast. This ability to reach large audiences simultaneously will become a very important factor within six months to a year."

According to Seaman, another rapidly emerging technology for Internet broadcasting is wireless transmission. "This is a tremendous growth area because so much bandwidth has been freed up," he notes, pointing out that AudioNet is already in discussions with several companies about offering such a service. "I'm personally looking forward to the day when I can replace my car radio and listen to AudioNet while driving. I don't think that day is very far away."

While the string of webcasting technology announcements dominated the news, webcast programmers compared notes this summer at a two-day conference in New York City. Sponsored by the Burlington, Massachusetts-based Center for Business Intelligence and moderated by Peggy Miles, president of the Washington D.C. web site consulting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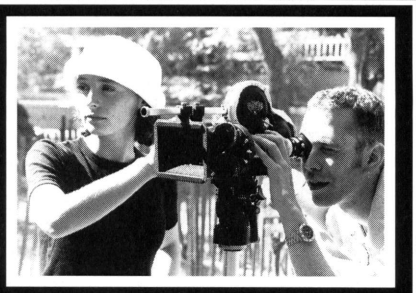

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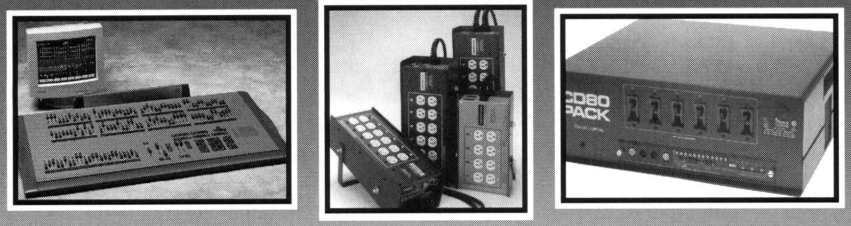

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firm Intervox Communications, the event brought together a "who's who" of major webcasters.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the conference was the quick realization that webcasting is so new and primitive that no one — including the largest media corporations — is really aware of how it would be best utilized. For the moment, at least, broadcasting over the Internet is a level playing field where anyone with the right stuff can still be a successful participant.

Many web sites offered by media companies fail because they are vague and unfocused, several new media executives told the conference. A key consideration for those planning a presence on the web, they urged, is to know what the nature of site is before building it. "If you are going to take your web site out to a dinner party, how would you introduce it?" asked Tom Regan, supervising on-line editor for the *Christian Science Monitor*. "If you can't summarize your web site in 25 words or less, then I don't think you really know what your site is about."

Dominique Noth, an Internet consultant, warned webcasters not to assume that the medium will "dumb down" over time like over-the-air television. "A lot of people want to make it like television," suggested Noth. "They want to find a cheaper, simpler appliance — a dumb terminal for dumber customers who will accept the mixture of advertising and content thrown at them. For those who go in that direction, all I can say is, 'God help you.' I think customers are drawn to this medium precisely for the sense of feeling empowered. They have a higher expectation of services than some would like to think."

(Those who want to know more about webcasting can check out the following pair of e-mail lists. For general webcasting info, send an e-mail to majordomo@broadcast.net and type "subscribe webcasting" in the text field. To join a list on upcoming webcasting events, send an e-mail to the same address with the words "subscribe webcasting-events" in the text field.) ◆

Frank Beacham is a New York City-based writer and producer. Visit his web site at: http://www.beacham.com. Mail: 163 Amsterdam Ave. #361, New York, NY 10023. E-mail: frank@beacham.com

On the open road, Steven Shaw can enjoy the moment.

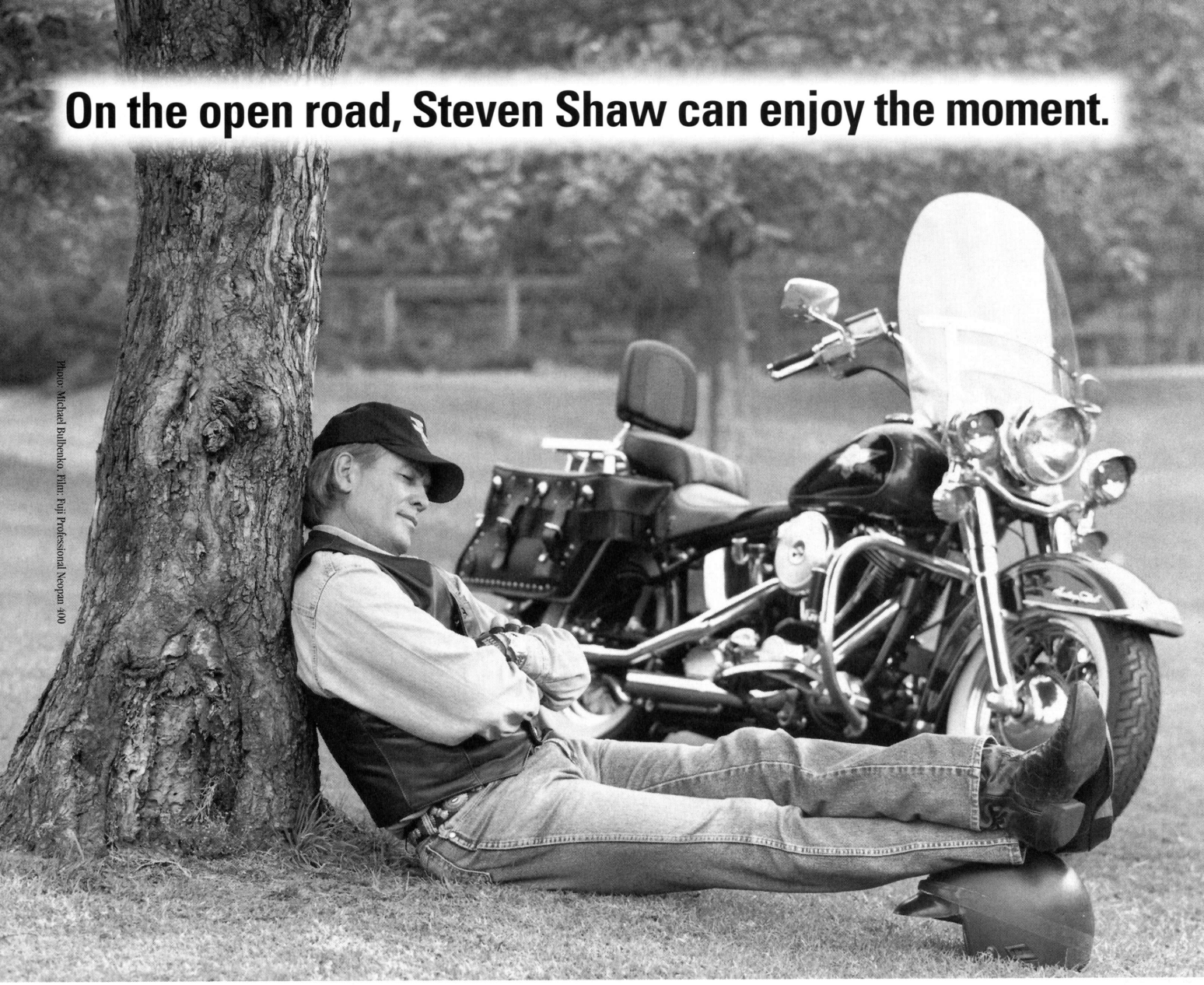

Photo: Michael Bulbenko. Film: Fuji Professional Neopan 400

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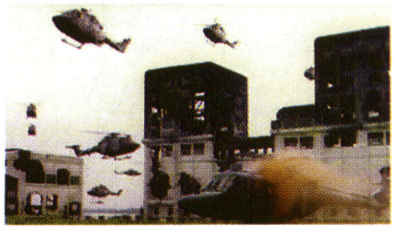

***Members of the Britpop band Oasis descend upon the derelict, dilapidated London gas works area of Becton in the video for their single "D'You Know What I Mean." Ardent cineastes will recognize the industrial wasteland as the setting of wartime Vietnam scenes in Stanley Kubrick's* Full Metal Jacket.**

Full Metal Oasis

by Chris Pizzello

The marriage of Sixties rock 'n' roll music to a Vietnam War backdrop has been plied to stunning effect by filmmakers ranging from Francis Ford Coppola to Oliver Stone. For a band as steeped in rock history as Britain's Oasis, the concept behind the video for their recent single "D'You Know What I Mean" must have been irresistable: to shoot an epic, 7 ½-minute clip on the same abandoned London terrain employed by Stanley Kubrick for the "Vietnam" scenes in *Full Metal Jacket.*

The notoriously bellicose band had sent copies of their sweeping, anthemic song to a variety of A-list video directors, but were most impressed by the treatment conceived by the British video directing duo Dom Hawley and Nick Goffey. The pair had made a name for themselves through a series of arresting spots for the English rock trio Supergrass, whose drummer, Danny Goffey, is Nick's younger brother. The team's joyous video for Supergrass' U.K. hit "Alright" even landed them a few meetings last year with an impressed Steven Spielberg, who toyed with the idea of creating a modern, *Monkees*-style episodic television program starring the mop-topped members of Supergrass.

London-based cinematographer Dan Landin, whose extensive resumé includes the "Alright" video as well as clips for such artists as Björk ("Possibly Maybe"), Blur ("Charmless Man") and Reef ("Place Your Hands"), served as the cameraman for the three-day "D'You Know What I Mean" location shoot.

"Oasis doesn't really enjoy making videos, so that has to be taken into account when one is conceiving an idea for them," Landin says. "They don't particularly want to be actors or to get into the 'scenarios' that a lot of other bands [enact] in videos, and they don't like performing to cameras. Yet they've got real presence, which counts for a lot in screen terms. The band chose Dom and Nick because they liked their idea — but also, I suppose, because they wouldn't have to do much other than perform the song!"

As the psychedelic intro to "D'You Know What I Mean" kicks in, the band is seen touching down in a military helicopter and strolling in slow motion to a barren stage in the middle of Becton, a derelict gas works area in London. "At one time, it was a great big area where they produced gas and pumped loads of sewage," Landin describes. "It's also a very toxic area, which was one of the problems of working there. We weren't allowed to touch any of the earth or move any of the rocks. You had to be very careful to avoid any blue soil, and none of the crew could go near any of the plants because of their toxicity."

As singer Liam Gallagher assumes his familiar defiant stance behind the microphone stand, helicopters begin buzzing around the stage, with a few of them landing to unload clusters of fatigue-wearing fans. "Dom and Nick wanted to place the band in a kind of abstract space that was beyond the realm of the usual music and media [environment]," the cinematographer explains. "The idea was to put Oasis in a sort of artificial world where the *band* was calling the shots, and they were not subject to the normal confines of a standard music video."

Landin relied on Kodak's 50 ASA 5245 stock to achieve the video's lucid, hyperreal atmosphere and selective splashes of color saturation, while the faster 320T Vision 5297 was employed for a few low-light sequences. "We didn't want to make the background look too bright and super-clean," he says. "We wanted to hold a lot of the midtones. It worked out quite nicely that we got a fair amount of overcast weather for the shoot. We had these really dark skies in the afternoons, which lent a really heavy, gritty atmosphere."

One of the visual hooks Landin exploited to add dimension to the video was a conscious use of lens flare in performance shots of the band. "That was something that Dom, Nick and I had experimented with on a Supergrass video called 'Going Out,'" the cinematographer explains. "Basically, I put a big [LTM 18K] backlight up behind the band, and we tried to shoot most of the video right into it. We experimented with different lenses, since each one reacts differently to lens flare. I particularly wanted to work at the longer end of the zoom lenses. In an age of computerized effects, the kind of flare you get from those lenses is quite organic. It gives you the feeling that you're there."

Landin employed wide-to-mid-range zooms (generally set at T3.5) to

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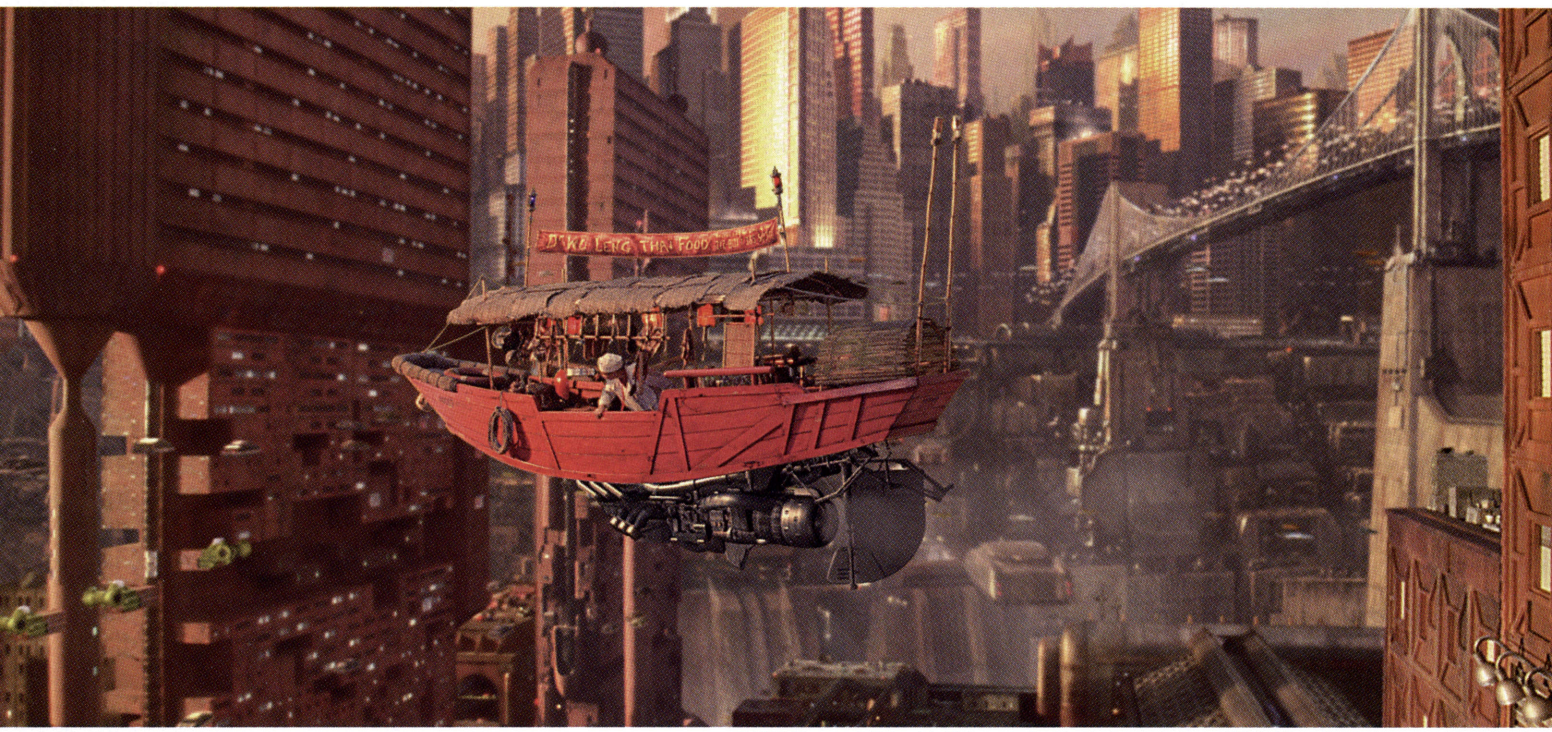

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"For plate photography we used Arriflex 535B cameras and a prototype of the new 435 high-speed camera. About halfway through production Arriflex replaced our prototype with one of their first production 435 cameras. Visual effects DP, Bill Neil and I were both surprised by the steadiness of both cameras at all speeds. In fact, the new 435 was rock steady, good enough for composite work from 1 fps to 150 fps, both forward and reverse. It instantly became our camera of preference throughout the production. Fantastic!"

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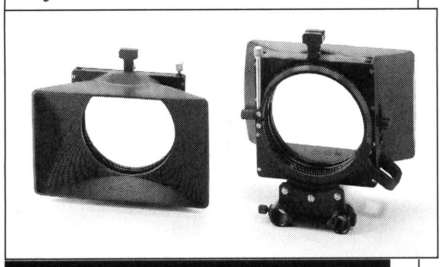

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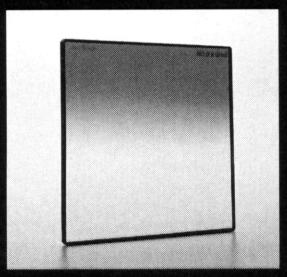

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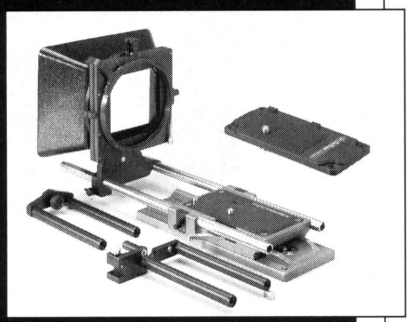

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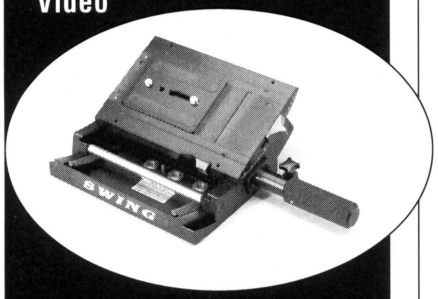

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capture low-angle performance shots of the band while the helicopters zoomed overhead. "We would usually shoot the band with the 18-100mm Cooke zoom on an Arriflex 435, and then we'd have a second Arriflex with another 18-100mm on a Louma crane," the cinematographer explains. "We'd use the second camera at a lower angle to get the shots of the band performing with the helicopters above them. We also used the Angenieux 25-250mm zoom, which I like a lot. You get nice resolution out of it, and it's a little bit faster than the equivalent Cooke. I come from a 16mm background, and one of the frustrations of working in 35mm is that the zoom lenses aren't as fast. It was nice to get that extra speed."

As the song builds in intensity, the number of helicopters buzzing around the band and their army of followers appears to multiply. In reality, a blend of visual suggestion and sleight-of-hand postproduction made a mere two helicopters look at times like an entire squadron. Landin explains, "Quite a lot of shots were designed to be wholly static, so that the helicopters could then fly in at different angles within a locked-off shot. Then, in postproduction, a matte could be placed over the sky portion of the shot, and the number of helicopters could be layered on.

"Most of the good shots contain just one or two helicopters that are merely suggested in the editing," he adds. "All you really need are a few composites to suggest that there are a lot of helicopters about, and then you can just show the details through close-ups. You're left with the impression that there are a lot of them there, without having to use fancy visual effects all the way through."

To further enhance shoot's *Apocalypse Now* feel, trained military pilots were employed by the production to expertly maneuver the choppers within extremely tight spaces. "We had very good ground-to-air communications," Landin explains. "Military pilots aren't bound by domestic aviation laws, so they could fly as low as they wanted to. The space in which the band performed was between two derelict buildings, and the gap was too narrow to accommodate the rotor blades of a helicopter. One of the pilots actually flew in at a diagonal angle so that the blades would fit between the buildings — at one point, the force of the blades was such that Liam Gallagher got blown right over! My gaffer, Lee Walters, had a very hard time holding down the three Arri 6K CinePars [gelled with 1/8 CTO and aimed through 12' x 12' diffusion cloths] that we were using to light the band, because of the downblast from the helicopters."

While the majority of contemporary music videos assault the viewer with a sensory overload of garish lighting effects and nervous jump-cuts, the more classically cinematic "D'You Know What I Mean" video seduces the viewer with slow-motion action, deliberate pans and clean, carefully composed visual frames. "With a band like Oasis, you don't want to astonish the viewer with visual trickery," Landin attests. "That approach goes against what they're about as a band. The challenge was to make something straight-ahead, yet interesting and visual enough to last for a long time."

Around the World in 24fps
by Eric Rudolph

Though British actor/writer Michael Palin is best known as an alumnus of the Monty Python comedy troupe, he is also quite the well-seasoned televisual traveler. He trotted the globe like Phineas Fogg in the seven-part series *Around the World in 80 Days,* and also staged a six-month, non-stop journey from one hemisphere to the next in the eight-episode show *Pole to Pole.* His latest voyage encompassed the entire 50,000-mile span of the Pacific Rim for the 10-part series *Full Circle with Michael Palin.* The hour-long shows have been slated to air on PBS affiliates Monday evenings from September 22 through December 1.

Like Palin's previous presentations, *Full Circle* benefits from its host's almost inexhaustible good will, gentle

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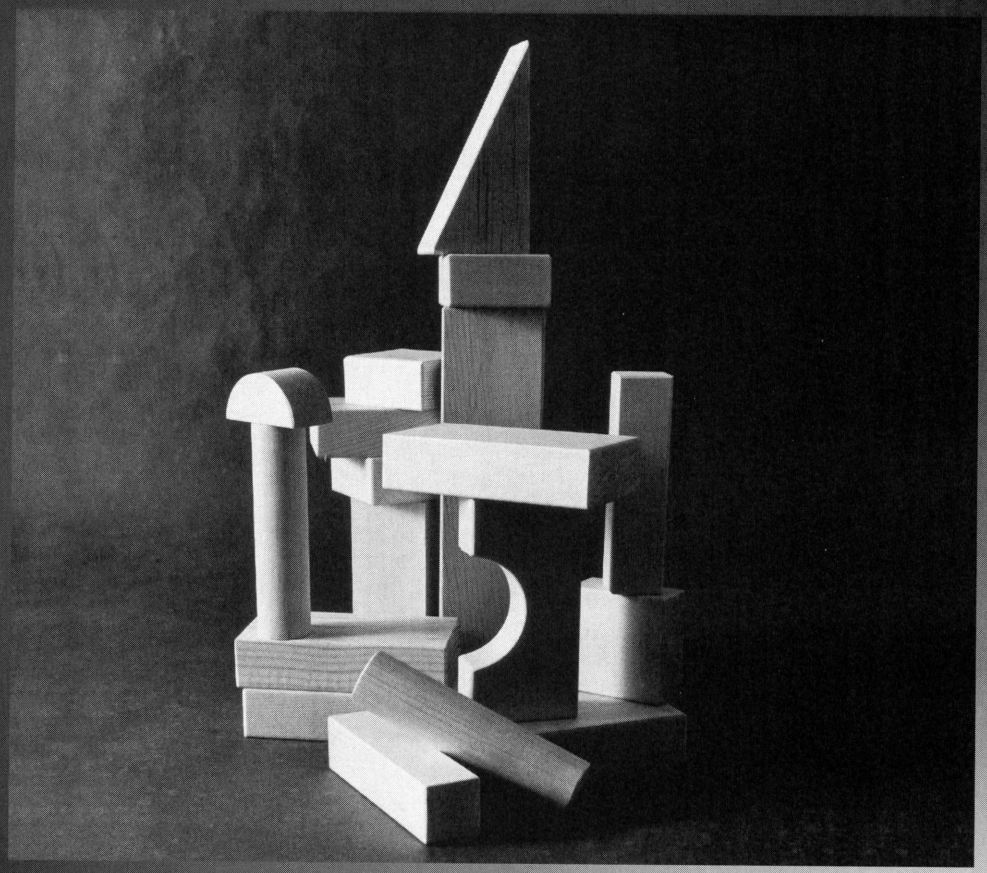

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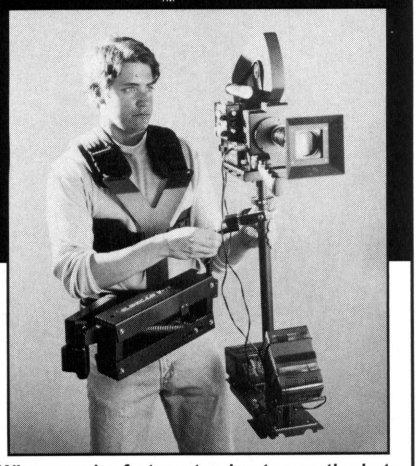

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yet incisive humor and relaxed composure amid a panorama of constantly shifting cultures and situations. Most details of the trips are planned quite carefully beforehand, but according to producer/director Clem Vallance (who shares directing chores with Roger Mills), "Michael has little advance knowledge of any of it, which helps us give the shows their sense of real adventure." To prepare each segment, Vallance traverses the predetermined route prior to the host and the five-person documentary crew, explaining that "you can't just show up at a frontier and busk your way across with a film crew."

A typical shoot involves numerous obstacles and taxing forms of transport, such as *Around the World*'s week-long voyage across the stormy, pirate-bedeviled Arabian Sea on a *dhow*, a small, rudimentary wooden cargo vessel powered by wind and a tiny, unreliable engine. Palin's *Full Circle* itinerary was no less demanding or unusual: during the series, he can be seen enduring a riot in South Korea; sipping prize-winning chardonnay at a Chinese vineyard and sleeping in Mao Tse Tung's bed; encountering a tribe of former headhunters in Borneo; braving fearsome rapids in a canoe in the Amazon basin; and touring Bogota, Columbia, a city rife with drug cartels that is described by his journalist-guide as "the murder capital of the world."

The series starts on a tiny island in the Bering Strait, between Alaska and Russia, and then ventures through Japan, Korea, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, the United States and Canada. Unlike Palin's previous trips, the year-long journey presented in *Full Circle* was broken into five shorter trips "in order to save our sanity and our marriages," says the producer/director. The longest excursion occurred during the final leg of the series, which extends from the tip of Cape Horn, South Africa to Alaska. Vallance recalls, "It was a long trip and quite an exciting one, taking us over the Andes mountains, up the Amazon and through Mexico and the States."

Palin does all of this hard traveling while being artfully filmed by an Aaton-toting BBC crew headed by director of photography Nigel Meakin, a 33-year veteran who has photographed all three series. Meakin's work on *Pole to Pole* earned him a 1993 BAFTA Award as Best Film Cameraman; his other credits include *Last African Flying Boat*, shown in the U.S. on ABC-TV as *Monsoon*.

What distinguishes *Full Circle* from a technical point of view is that it's produced on 16mm film rather than video. The latter format would have been both cheaper and easier to lug around, but the filmmakers opted for the higher quality of 16mm. "There was a suggestion that we use video, primarily to save on the cost of film stock," says Meakin. "We shot 700 rolls of 16mm film on this project, so when you factor in the cost of processing, we would have saved a fortune using tape. But film simply looks better; it has a rounder feel and responds to light with much more elegance. I dislike video intensely, and so does Clem. He deserves full credit for seeing that we used film, because [if he hadn't been involved on the project] *Full Circle* certainly might have been done on video."

The documentary crew consisted only of cinematographer Meakin, assistant Stephen Robinson and sound man Fraser Barber. Producer/director Vallance, a production assistant, a still photographer and Palin rounded out the seven-person entourage. A second full crew, including another director and cinematographer, took over at regular intervals. The documentarians traveled with a thousand pounds of gear, including two complete sets of equipment (save for a single set of Zeiss prime lenses and one long Canon zoom). The cameras were two Aaton XTR Prod models outfitted with identical Zeiss 10-100mm T2 zooms. Prime lenses included the Zeiss 9.5, 12, 16 and 25mm lenses (all T1.3), while the Canon 300-600mm 2.8 zoom completed the arsenal.

The redundancy of the gear often proved to be a crucial safeguard. Recalls Meakin, "On our first day of *Full Circle*, when we flew by helicopter to the island of Diomede in the Bering Strait, we discovered that one of our zoom lenses had been knocked out of collumation in transit. We muddled our way through the first few days using the second zoom, but that is not the way you want to start a project."

Lighting was provided mostly by available sources, but was supplemented when necessary by a modest

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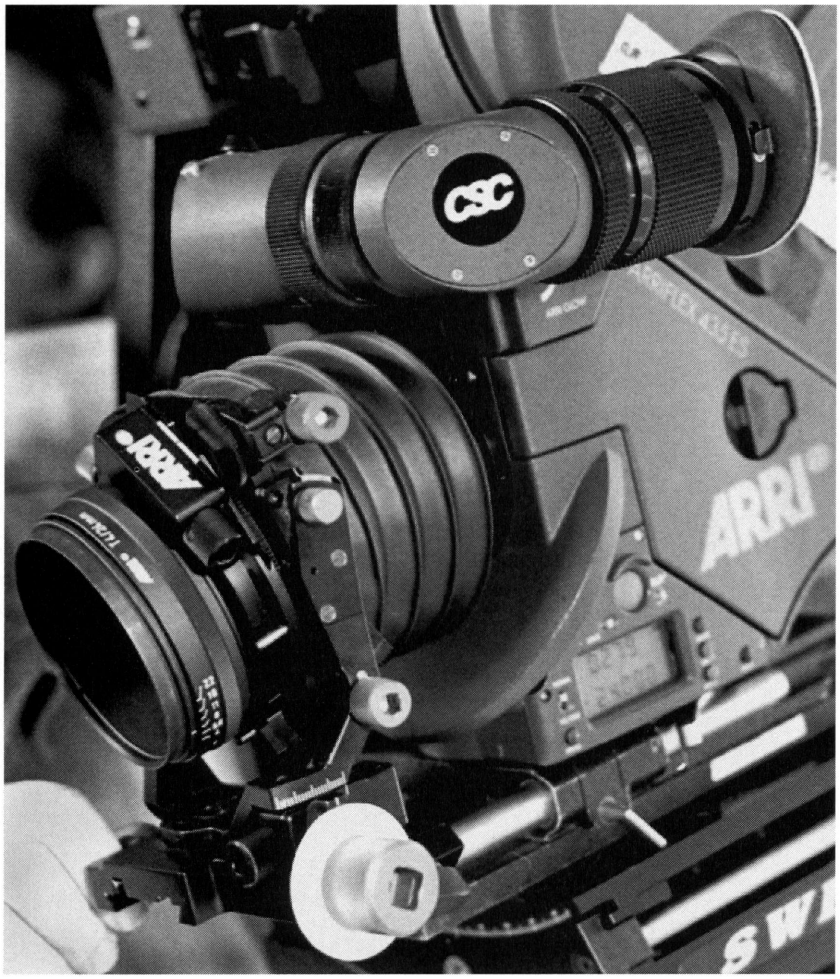

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18mm	T3.8 - T22	1:1.8	5"	60mm	T3.5 - T22	1:1.8	12"
20mm	T2.8 - T22	1:1.5	5"	80mm	T1.9 - T22	1:2.4	14 3/4"
24mm	T4.0 - T22	1:1.6	7"	90mm	T2.8 - T22	1:2.5	16 1/2"
28mm	T2.8 - T22	1:1.1	6 1/2"	110mm	T2.0 - T16	1:3.2	23"
35mm	T2.8 - T32	1:1.1	6 1/2"	150mm	T2.8 - T22	1:4.5	40"
45mm	T2.8 - T22	1:1.25	8"				

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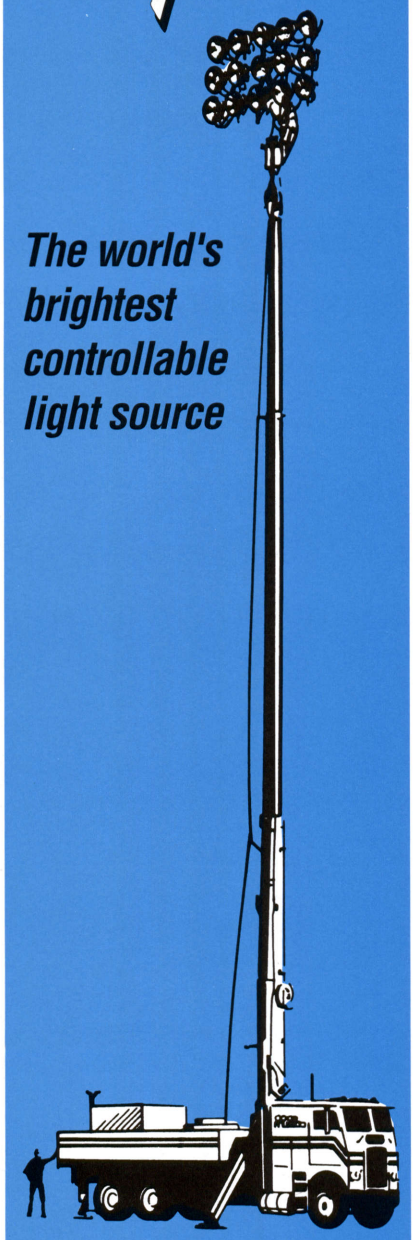
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package of four Arri 650 Fresnel heads and a Sun Gun. "I put in our small lights in the interiors whenever I could," says Meakin. "However, those places were often large, and there is little you can do with four 650's. I preferred to use the available light whenever possible. Outside, we used nothing but a Flexi-fill for the faces most of the time."

This worldwide imagery was captured on a combination of stocks — 100 ASA 7248, 200 ASA 7293 and 500 ASA 7298. "I used the 48 whenever possible for exteriors; it's my favorite," offers the cameraman. "The 93 was used for interiors which we were able to light, and the 98, of course, was reserved for the many low-light situations." Due to the isolated locales, opportunities to ship exposed film back to London were limited, a situation which often left the crew in the precarious position of carrying several shows' worth of exposed film along with the thousand pounds of gear.

The hauling of equipment was another key concern, since the *Full Circle* crew eschewed plane flights whenever possible in favor of ground and sea transportation. The technical crew doubled as porters, along with Michael Palin himself, whom Meakin says "will carry anything at all, any time he is asked." Local porters, however, were used only with close supervision. The cinematographer notes, "There is always someone willing to pinch something, given the chance, so we've always had a system whereby no piece of gear is ever left or carried without being closely watched by a member of our group." This system has thus far been successful: no gear has been stolen on any of the Palin travelogues.

Producing a popular, world-class documentary series in which the entertainment values are at least as important as the informational content may seem to be a daunting task, particularly when one considers the arcane transportation the group is forced to endure. But Meakin explains that the rough patches are ameliorated by a great deal of down time. "There is a limit to how much you can film on a given boat or train trip of any length; once you've got what's of interest, it is often possible to relax and enjoy the trip."

Meakin has been traveling on BBC projects for much of the past 30 years, and estimates that he has shot footage in approximately 87 countries. But on the Palin shows he still finds it a great challenge to serve as a cinematographer/operator on the frequent train trips, taken on railroads which are often primitive at best. "The diciest part of the job is hanging out the windows of these dodgy moving trains, holding on for dear life!" Meakin exclaims with a chuckle. "Some of that footage ends up looking pretty shaky, but believe me, it's the best I can do under the circumstances!"

Both Palin and Vallance have sworn that *Full Circle* is the final installment in the series. Referring to the travails encountered during the making of all three series, Palin recently told a group of television reporters, "We were all immensely lucky that we got back without serious illness or accident."

Asked to describe his most unusual experience while shooting a Michael Palin travel program, Meakin admits with a sigh, "I've been doing this sort of thing for 30 years; I'm afraid that what might be exotic to another person is, by now, quite ordinary to me."

The Hour of the Wolf
by Jim Dutcher

Wolves have become extremely elusive due to an 80-year effort to annihilate them — the result of myths and fallacies which have surrounded wolves for hundreds of years. As a documentarian, I was concerned that filming wolves in the wild would not only be extremely difficult, but more importantly, disruptive to their behavior.

The results of my most recent study, *Wolves at Our Door* (which airs October 27 on the Discovery Channel) brought new complications to my methods of filming elusive animals, which I had used previously on *Beaver Pond* (see *AC* May '88) and *Cougar: Ghost of the Rockies* (*AC* March '91). The wolf project turned out to be a six-year odyssey of trials and tribulations, from setting up our first canvas tents in the Sawtooth Mountains to relocating the wolves to the tribal lands of the Nez Perce.

The course I took was to create a captive pack that would be familiar with people yet still retain its natural, instinctive behavior. Knowing that adult wolves would be afraid of people, I began by raising two-week-old puppies, and was successful in gaining their trust. A 25-acre enclosure (constructed of

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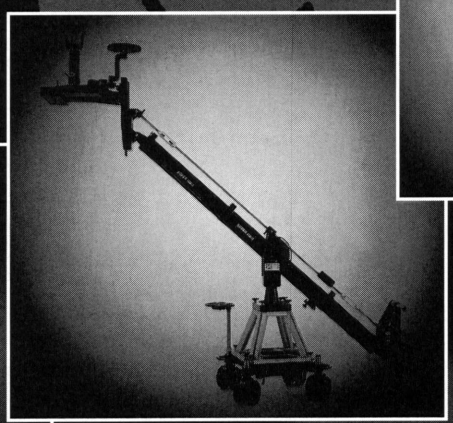

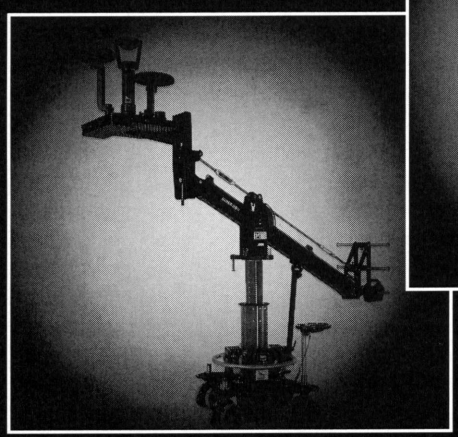

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***Wolves roam the wilds of southwest Idaho on a site owned by the Native American Nez Perce Tribe in Jim Dutcher's nature documentary* Wolves at Our Door.**

3,500 running feet of chain-link fencing) was set up on the edge of some wilderness where these animals would allow me to photograph them without fear or apprehension. Although the wolves were habituated to humans, they were not pets; they would not obey commands, or respond to their names. But with such an abundance of available space, the wolves followed their natural instincts, often behaving with extreme aggression to establish and maintain the intricate levels of their social hierarchy.

The project was eventually divided into two parts. The first film, *Wolf: Return of a Legend,* aired in December 1993 on ABC's *World of Discovery* series. Although this documentary was well-received, earning an Emmy Award, our puppy pack was merely maturing when we ended production. With the exciting new wolf behavior developing before us, we decided to initiate a second study.

To capture wolf behavior around the clock and throughout the seasons, a tented camp was assembled within the wolves' territory; it consisted of a wall tent for sleeping and camera storage, a yurt elevated on a platform for cooking, and other sleeping facilities. Through this manner of observation, we had immediate access to the wolves, and their fascinating behavior became more apparent as they accepted us into their pack. Wolves are both intelligent and social, and their pack hierarchy created numerous tales, only a few of which could be included in the film. The caring they exhibited toward each other and us made a lasting impression. We began to understand that the wolves' seemingly ferocious behavior was actually essential to their maintainence of pack hierarchy and cohesiveness, and ultimately helped to ensure the pack's survival.

Noting the intricacies of the wolves' behavior, I shot all of the footage at 30-60fps to highlight the subtleties of their interaction. The opening scenes of the film show the pack running in near-darkness through fog, then descending on their prey with yellow, green and red glowing eyes. A 1200 Par HMI light and fog machines enhanced the atmosphere, while a Maglite attached to my Arri SRII reflected the light in the wolves' eyes; the idea was to illustrate the beast of people's dreams and nightmares — veritable devils in the dark. To achieve a stop-action effect, I recorded these scenes at 8fps to create the historical perception of the wolf as vicious predator, which we could then contrast with the modern wolf of daylight, science and enlightenment.

The wolves' repertoire of bodily postures and facial expressions is accompanied by their elaborate vocalizations, which communicate their intentions, emotions and desires. My wife, Jamie, would record these sounds with a Sony DAT Pro II recorder equipped with Sennheister 416 shotgun and Shure stereo microphones, along with a PSC M4 mixer. At night, with a Shure stereo microphone outside the tent and the DAT recorder and mixer in our sleeping bag, she would record the wolves' howls.

Life at the wolf camp presented its own sets of challenges. At an elevation of 6,500 feet, the snow can sometimes fall every month of the year, and 200 inches can pile up during winter. Temperatures could plummet to -40°F at night, and snowstorms would obliterate our trails. We constantly had to bring road-killed deer or elk to the camp to feed the pack. Another worry was the fence and the surrounding trees in lightning and wind storms. Before we were able to move our camp inside the enclosure, bears would devour our food supply; on one occasion, a cougar scaled the fence and killed one of the wolves. On three occasions, forest fires encroached on our space, obliterating the sun and dropping hot cinders into the camp.

Exceeding natural threats, however, were human obstacles. Ranchers, miners and hunters threatened both the crew and the wolves; our government permits were constantly challenged; expensive environmental assessments were requested of us; and false claims of ownership were even attempted on the wolves themselves. The pack's fate was another concern, as releasing them into the wild was never a possibility. Without fear of humans, they would undoubtedly be killed. Ultimately, this was resolved by the Nez Perce Tribe and their generous leasing of land which now serves as the wolves' permanent home.

Located near Winchester in southwest Idaho, the Nez Perce site and its Interpretive Center provides public education and gives people the rare opportunity to view wolves in a wild setting. There, the members of the pack can continue in their roles as ambassadors for their species.

Dutcher Film Productions, (208) 726-3802.

Third Annual Widescreen Festival

The Richard and Karen Carpenter Arts Center at California State University, Long Beach has announced that it will present the Third Annual Widescreen Film Festival in association with the American Society of Cinematographers, the American Cinema Editors, the Artists Rights Foundation, the Directors Guild of America, the International Photographers Guild, the Motion Picture Editors Guild, and the Society of Motion Picture and Television Art Directors.

The festival will be held over three weekends, beginning October 31 and continuing through November 16, 1997. A total of 11 films will honor the achievements of cinematographers, editors and production designers in the Carpenter Center's spectacular auditorium. In addition, a special screening will be held at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences on Friday, November 7.

This year's festival will also feature two educational programs on cinematography. On Saturday, November 2, the International Photographers Guild will present a panel discussion organized by George Spiro Dibie, ASC. Preceding

the panel discussion, John Hora, ASC and film historian Rick Mitchell will present a seminar on the overlooked subject of widescreen filmmaking in 8mm and 16mm, which was was quite popular in the Fifties and Sixties among amateurs and professionals working in industrial, educational and documentary films. Hora and Mitchell have even tracked down a print of the first professional 16mm anamorphic film — made in 1954 — and are seeking additional examples, including student films such as *Cold Sun* (made at UCLA in the early Seventies).

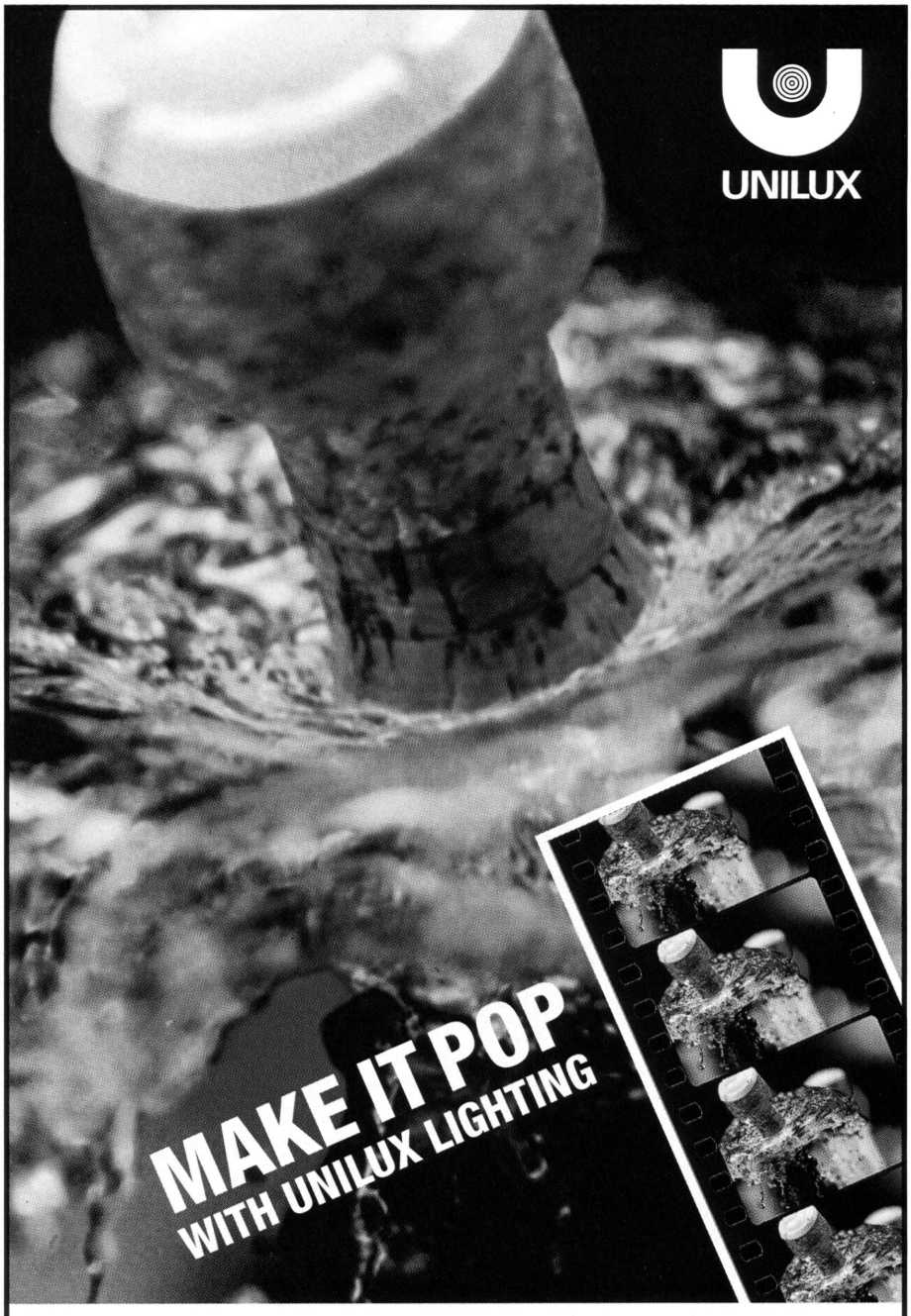
Other educational programs at the festival will include sessions on editing, production design, and the history of film in Long Beach. The event is also expanding its efforts to generate public awareness about the importance of film preservation. The new documentary *Race to Save 100 Years* will precede a panel discussion led by preservationist Richard P. May.

Filmmaker Robert Wise, in his introduction to *West Side Story* during last year's Festival, began by congratulating the Carpenter Performing Arts Center on its exceptional facilities. The spacious 1,100-seat auditorium has a state-of-the-art projection system, digital surround sound, comfortable seating and excellent sightlines. The Center is located one exit from the junction of the 405 and 605 freeways and offers ample, convenient parking.

If you have any information regarding 16mm anamorphic films, please contact the Third Annual Widescreen Festival at (562) 985-7033, or send mail to Carpenter Performing Arts Center, 6200 Atherton Street, Long Beach, CA 90815.

1998 L.A. Indie Film Festival

The 1998 Los Angeles Independent Film Festival will be accepting submissions from October 16, 1997 until January 16, 1998. All entries must be submitted on ½" VHS tape. Since the festival showcases North American works, at least two of the principal filmmakers (writer, director, producer) must be either American or Canadian residents. Films must have been completed after January 1, 1996. For further details and submission forms, call (213) 960-9460 or check out the LAIFF web site at www.laiff.com. ◆



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Color of Justice Bends Conventions

Director Jeremy Kagan and cinematographer Steven Poster, ASC take an experimental tack on a tale of heinous crime and its consequences.

by Bob Fisher

Photos by Rafy, courtesy of Showtime.

Standing beneath a soft overhead source, Steven Poster, ASC (center, with glasses) lines up a shot. Observing at far right is Norman Parker (in cap), Poster's longtime camera assistant.

Color of Justice is an original Showtime Entertainment television movie scripted by writer-producer Lionel Chetwynd, who has also compiled interesting credits as a director, including *Hanoi Hilton*. The project reunited director Jeremy Kagan with cinematographer Steven Poster, ASC for the third time. The duo's first two collaborations resulted in the award-winning telefilms *Courage* (1986) and *Roswell* (see *AC* Feb. 1995).

Shot in Toronto but set in New York, *Justice* features Judd Hirsch, Gregory Hines, F. Murray Abraham and an ensemble cast in an urban drama that begins when four black youths from the Bronx murder a white woman and subsequently steal her car. The four are later arrested and put on trial, but Kagan points out that the film is not of the "who-dunnit" genre. "We know who committed the crime," he says. "The question is, who's responsible?"

The issue of culpability is raised by an activist who turns the trial into a divisive debate about racial justice. The movie isn't just about the randomness of the murder, the lives of the murderers, or the horror of a husband losing his wife. It's also about the agendas of the prosecutors, the defense attorneys and the other individuals who thrust themselves into the process. Eventually, the families of the murdered woman and the perpetrators become mere pawns in the game. "The only way this movie works is if the audience identifies or empathizes with people in the cast," Kagan says. "The story is not about just one character, and that's what makes it so interesting. You say to yourself, 'I understand where this guy is coming from, and I agree with him, but I also understand where that other guy is coming from, and I agree with him too.' I think that kind of challenge is rare. I credit Lionel for giving us rich material with that kind of depth."

Why do stories like this generally end up on the TV screen? "It's about casting," Chetwynd answers. "I wrote *Color of Justice* as an ensemble piece, because life is largely an ensemble event. However, that type of approach makes it very hard to cast stars who

would make it possible to sell a movie. If you don't have a big star, you aren't going to make it as a feature. We talked about doing it as a feature, but I would have had to do a substantial rewrite. I wanted to do a film noir story, and I was glad to have the chance to do that. If it weren't for cable, I don't think I'd be able to make these kinds of films."

Chetwynd adds that the cable venue grants filmmakers a great deal of freedom. "You are allowed to take more risks and experiment more in terms of how you want a film to look. Basically, you can be more daring. Steven Poster did some really imaginative and remarkable things on this show."

Poster's feature credits include *Someone to Watch Over Me, Rocky V, Testament, The Boy Who Could Fly, The Cemetery Club* and the upcoming Disney picture *Rocket Man*.

Above: ***Director Jeremy Kagan (with beard) prepares his actors for a demonstration scene.*** **Left:** ***Reporters interview Frank Gainer (Bruce Davison), the husband of the woman whose murder sparks a citywide controversy.***

Director Kagan says that he and Poster share a drive to push the form in new directions. "It's been different each time we've worked together," he says. "It's nice to have a familiarity and creative understanding already in place. We begin each project by asking ourselves if there is a way to tell the story in a more arresting way that will create a better experience for the audience. In *Courage*, for example, Sophia Loren's character gets into deeper trouble than anticipated. I asked Steve to make that statement visually, and he suggested using Dutch angles to express her disorientation. We shot that show in 1983, and changing the level of the shots hadn't been done [on television] since the mid-1950s. Steve is also fascinated with applying unusual techniques to the aesthetics of filmmaking."

In the case of *Justice*, the duo tried to bend the rules of traditional composition. When the camera was looking over an actor's shoulder, for example, Poster and Kagan often used that person's body to create negative space, forcing the other actor to the edge of the frame.

The filmmakers also experimented with some other interesting techniques that would lend urgency to their tale, which takes a close look at how the crime affects the relatives of those involved. The husband of the murdered woman seeks justice, while the father of one of the implicated youths must come to grips with the idea that his son is a killer. Kagan says that he sought Poster's help in devising a special way to convey the roiling emotions of these characters. "I told Steve, 'I want to get their faces on top of each other, almost like superimpositions," Kagan says. "Steve spoke to the production designer, Jeff Ginn, about the set and the kind of lighting he wanted to do. Jeff created a visiting room with glass partitions. In the one that was photographed, the glass was gimbaled from side to side so Poster could line up the faces and avoid reflections of the camera by moving the glass."

Poster explains, "In a situation like that, the hard part is balancing the light for the proper density of the reflected image to the live image. Placing the lamps out of the shot creates an interesting set of problems. It's also tricky to get the proper eyelines of the two actors to match. The reflected actor always has to look at a place to one side of the other performer. The result was a sequence of shots in which the faces of the characters are almost directly superimposed. We got away from the traditional idea of cutting back and forth."

Kagan characterizes *Justice* as a classic narrative drama and didn't want to distance the audience by presenting the story as "just a movie." Instead, he wanted viewers to feel like participants affected by the outcome. "Steve and I had a discussion about finding a visual approach that would express the story's angst and anxiety," he says. "We couldn't isolate this incident of urban violence without addressing racial bigotry, legal corruption and journalistic hypocrisy. In addition, there are two families trapped in the midst of a horrific situation. I told Steve, 'I want our

Above: ***Attorney Sam Lind (Judd Hirsch) and his clients appear before the court. Poster worked closely with production designer Jeff Ginn to design a courtroom set that would allow the filmmakers to light through the windows and place hard half-light on all of the actors.*** **Right:** ***Lind and his legal opponent, prosecutor Jim Sullivan (F. Murray Abraham), spar in the chambers of Judge Winslow (Jackie Richardson).***

black faces to turn white, and our white faces to turn black.'"

Kagan's point was that the characters' skin colors were purely arbitrary distinctions. Picking up on this notion, Poster worked with Ginn to design the courtroom set in a way that enabled him to light through the windows and place hard half-light on all of the actors. "The actress playing the judge is black, but half of her face looks white," Kagan says.

"It became a matter of manipulating contrasts," explains Poster. "I tried to always create a light surface on a dark background and a dark surface on a light background. Also in this case, I decided to increase the contrast of the last scene by pushing the film on stop in the processing. I was able to further enhance this effect in telecine. The big issue is when a director requests an effect like that, how do you interpret his desires for style so they fit within the story and walk the edge of innovation at the same time? We always have to consider where this image will take the audience."

Kagan adds, "We shot about half of the picture handheld with the camera moving. Sometimes we didn't let the operator [Kevin Jewison] know what was *going* to happen, and I became his guide. I'd whisper in his ear, 'Pan left — no — move, take it up.' I'd be talking to the actors while Steve watched the video monitor and gave me suggestions. He understood the energy I wanted."

Poster confirms, "Jeremy had given me a mandate that he wanted every frame of the film to have tension. He wanted to force the audience into an uncomfortable position. Our approach took teamwork and trust, because we never reviewed the tape from the video tap."

The cinematographer shot *Color of Justice* with a Panaflex camera, most often equipped with a lightweight Panavision T2.8 27-68mm zoom lens. Poster explains, "The lens didn't have Panavision's best optics, but it was a very flexible tool for the kind of handheld shooting we were doing. We could change the frame size in the middle of a moving shot, and we had a FTZSAC remote-control device for focus. I had a lot of electronics hanging off the camera: a zoom motor, a transmitter for the remote focus system, and a wireless transmitter for the video tap. Considering how many supplemental electronics we had on the camera, it was a flexible and trouble-free setup."

Kagan uses an anecdote from the show to illustrate the creative synchronicity that he and Poster have developed: "At one point, we were working like crazy to get a night shot of one car following another," the director recalls. "We needed a section of road with a single lane, but all of the areas we were allowed to shoot in had two lanes. I was wondering how we could rewrite the sequence when Steve came up with the idea of putting a series of blinking yellow lights in the other lane, as if there was some road work going on. The pulsing lights solved my problem and also contributed to the drama."

Poster remembers the scene as the first major night sequence that he pushed more than one stop. "I had my heart in my

throat a bit," the cameraman admits. "This was one of those areas with no ambient light. But on a smaller-budget project like a cable movie, I needed to have an easy and effective way to do big night exteriors. Pushing seemed to be the answer. I put two Maxi-Brutes on cherrypickers at opposite sides of the set, about 100 yards from where we were shooting. We could turn the camera either way and have plenty of backlight to shoot in both directions. In fact, I even used the Primo zoom several times that night.

"The Vision 500T film was remarkable. After a two-stop push there was hardly any evidence of big grain buildup. The contrast increased, but that helped the scene. After that night, I found myself using a two-stop push many more times for other scenes." Poster notes that each of the film's scenes had a specific color signa-

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ture drawn from the three-color palette of a traffic signal. Red was used to indicate danger, yellow signified caution, and green symbolized envy, avarice and sometimes action. Before each scene, he'd ask Kagan, "What color is this shot?"

"That strategy forced me to think about the nature of each scene," Kagan says. "Was the mood of a scene heat and passion, great danger, or maybe just a warning or anticipation of danger? Every film evolves from your initial intentions through your understanding of the process, and the realities that limit what you can do. All of us should be contributing to making the story that began on paper better on film. Otherwise, you should just mail the audience the script and ask them to read it."

A number of the film's sets, including the courtroom, were reconstructed from those used in other films. None were built from scratch. Kagan notes that there were three standing courtroom sets in Toronto: one wasn't available, a second was too expensive, and the third was simply wrong. He wanted the courtroom to be small, and a bit rundown. Kagan explains, "Lionel used to be a lawyer, so he envisioned a traditional courtroom. We didn't have the money to build that kind of set, and it didn't feel right anyway. Steve suggested that we make it look as if they'd divided a large courtroom into three smaller ones with half-finished walls and exposed wiring. The back of the courtroom is used as a storage area; it's covered with boxes and piles of files."

Kagan used the courtroom set to symbolize the pressure and decay that mars the legal system. "Lionel wrote a wonderful opening line," he says. "'Welcome to my still-unfinished courtroom. They tell me it'll be finished one day.' We designed a shot that went almost 360 degrees around the courtroom. As the judge was making her opening comment, we moved around the courtroom with the camera and introduced the characters who were coming in and sitting down. It was done in one shot. It was an evolutionary moment, motivated by the concept that the legal system is overburdened and falling apart."

Poster says Kagan's penchant for staging such dynamic shots always provides him with challenges in terms of both lighting and camera movement. "Shooting so much of this show handheld allowed us to move in different ways than you normally might on a dolly," he comments. "There is a fluidity that comes from shooting handheld. It was an accommodation to reality that created visual tension. Jeremy and I work on a level of mutual trust. I know that his ability to stage scenes and block for the camera almost never puts me into a corner — literally. He knows that I will always find a way of solving the problems that he gives me by the complexity of the shots. He knows that if I have to modify a shot slightly to accommodate all that he wants, Jeremy will always make the adjustment."

As an example, Poster cites a scene filmed in the judge's chambers, an office in a big warehouse with a couple of windows. An earlier scene on the same set had given the cinematographer a chance to study the light. Kagan's initial idea was that the operator would stand in the middle of the room and pan in a circle. Poster improvised an instant dolly: working with his grips, he took an office chair, built it up a little higher and created a place for the operator's feet so that he could shoot handheld while rotating in a circle. "When we got to the staging, we realized that the concept was wrong," Poster says. "Instead, Jeremy had us walk the camera around the perimeter of the room and look in at the participants. Once we completed the move, we panned in toward the center of the room, and then back to the doors. There was a tremendous amount of movement.

"We had two windows with venetian blinds," he continues. "I didn't have that much control over the exterior light, because the sun was in and out of the clouds all day. I got a little fill by hanging a small 1200-watt HMI in the center of the room and bouncing light off the ceiling. We adjusted the blinds as the exterior light changed between takes."

Faced with this and other complex setups, Poster benefitted from the work of crackerjack crew members who were familiar with his style. Operator Kevin Jewison had previously worked with Poster and Kagan on *Courage*, and the cinematographer was also able to hire his regular camera assistant, Norman Parker, who has worked with him for some 20 years. The grip and electrical crews were local. Poster reserved some special praise for his gaffer, Ian Bibby. "He made my life a lot easier," Poster says. "He was always offering suggestions, and I like that from my crew. I could tell him the direction, angle and quality of light, and leave the rest up to him."

Poster shot *Color of Justice* entirely on Kodak Vision 5279 500T film. For the aforementioned courtroom scene, he rated the stock at EI 800, with a one-stop push in developing. "That was a tremendous advantage for a couple of reasons," the cameraman says. "I wanted to build up contrast and grain, so the scene would have a grittier feeling. When I first tested this idea, I took the camera outside at night, opened the lens and started shooting. It hardly showed a difference with a one-stop push. At two stops, you still didn't see much grain, but there was some increase in contrast. The Vision stock has a lovely personality, in that it makes you want to walk a bit further toward the edge. From that point on, I decided we could make much more use of ambient light by pushing one or two stops."

In the judge's quarters, Poster decided to push the 5279 a stop for more depth of field, which allowed him to minimize his lighting for the interior. "It turned out to be a very organic look," he says. "Of course, I died every time we passed the window and the light had changed, but the reality was that the film held the highlights and shadows. The Vision stock is really an amazing emulsion that way. It gives you the freedom to do things you couldn't do in the past when you had to light everything properly."

Poster pushed the 5279 two stops for a South Bronx night exterior scene in which police

chase the youths into a viaduct near a street corner. The cinematographer created and shaped an ambient-light scheme with a few small lamps, but was forced to add a few other naturalistic touches as well. "When you're shooting South Bronx street scenes in Toronto, you have to become a bit of a vandal," Poster explains with a laugh. "We painted graffiti on the viaduct walls, and tossed some garbage around. Before the graffiti went up, the production design team covered the walls with a special type of coating so that the paint would come off easily. When all was said and done, the scene had a wonderful look."

The show's negative was processed at Film House in Toronto. Occasionally, Poster requested film prints if he wanted a closer look, but he generally received video dailies. To ensure the consistency of his visuals, Poster worked closely with the film's video colorist, Chris Dover. He notes, "Early on, I gave Chris a copy of the script, because it was important for him to know the story." After shooting a test, Poster would visit the telecine suite, and he also asked Dover to sit with him in the screening room to look at prints. "The time we spent together gave Chris a feeling for what we were doing," he says. "We had daily communications."

Poster notes that *Color of Justice*'s experimental compositions also required a bit of tweaking in telecine. "Showtime wanted us to compose for a 1.85:1 aspect ratio," he explains, "because they wanted to leave themselves the option of doing an overseas theatrical release, or at least private screenings. However, the vast majority of people will see this film on television. It would have been physically, emotionally and mentally impossible to compose for different formats at the same time, so when we went to telecine, I recomposed the images for the TV screen. As far as I'm concerned, the cinematographer has to be there for telecine, because that is the resolution of everything we do." ◆

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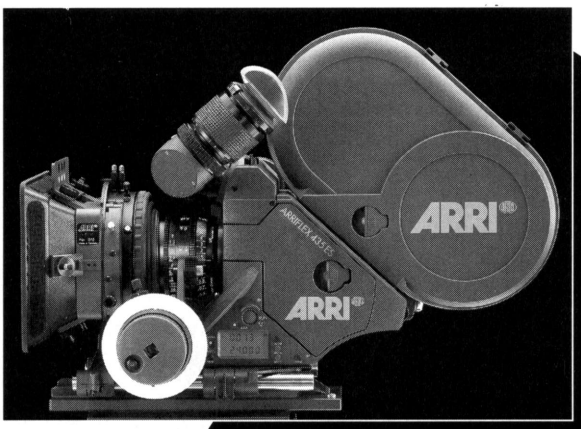

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Following the release of *Nixon* (see *AC* March 1996), director Oliver Stone had planned on pursuing filmed biographies of Alexander the Great and Manuel Noriega. But when those projects stalled for various reasons, the filmmaker opted to helm a more intimate film that would allow him to exercise his directing skills in a new genre. The $20 million *U-Turn*, drawn from John Ridley's script *Stray Dogs*, is a modern-day film noir set in the Southwest. The thriller tells the tale of loner-on-the-lam Bobby Cooper (Sean Penn), a quintessential drifter who cruises interstate highways in a sleek, scarlet Mustang convertible.

When Cooper's car conks out, he becomes stranded in the defunct mining town of Superior, Arizona (pop. 3,485), where he is surrounded by a cast of colorful, crazy characters —including sultry Apache siren Grace McKenna (Jennifer Lopez). Cooper quickly succumbs to the femme fatale's spell, only to discover that she is married to gruff local real estate broker Jake McKenna (Nick Nolte), who unexpectedly offers Bobby a handsome sum to slay his philandering wife. The drifter doesn't realize, however, that he's merely a pawn in a double-cross scheme that culminates in a slam-bang climax inspired by such Sam Peckinpah classics as *The Wild Bunch* and *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*.

Stone offers, "In a sense, *U-Turn* is my homage to film noir and also Westerns, because it has the rancher, the drifter, and all of the other characters [from the latter genre]. To me, film noir is about characters who are always desperate and alienated; the odds are against them, and the happy endings are few. Some people will tell you that film noir can only be associated with city streets, dark shadows and trenchcoats, but there's no reason why noir cannot cross into the Western genre. *Body Heat* was a very successful film noir, and it was set in the tropical Everglades. I respect the genres, but I don't feel that I have to live within their rules.

"This movie is very story-oriented, and I'm dealing with a genre that I've never worked in before. This is what Alfred

Desert Noir

Director Oliver Stone and cinematographer Robert Richardson, ASC parlay radical stock options in the genre-blending *U-Turn*.

by Andrew O. Thompson

Hitchcock, Billy Wilder and André de Toth did — they just told stories, regardless of genre. I view this movie as one day in the life of Bobby Cooper, who gambles until the very end. You don't know which way he's going to go, because he has ups and downs all day long. Under those circumstances, I didn't want to spend more than [$20 million] — these unreal prices in Hollywood are driving everybody crazy. I wanted to do this on the cheap with everybody riding the back end [profits]."

To realize this stripped-down fusion of genres, the director once again enlisted cameraman Robert Richardson, ASC, who's served as Stone's director of photography on *Salvador, Platoon, Wall Street, Talk Radio, Born on the Fourth of July, The Doors, JFK, Heaven and Earth, Natural Born Killers* and *Nixon*. Richardson's highly influential work for Stone has earned him numerous accolades, including an Oscar for *JFK*, Academy nominations for *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*, and Independent Spirit Award nominations for *Salvador, Platoon* and *Talk Radio*. He has also received five ASC Award nominations, most recently for *Heaven and Earth*. The cameraman's other credits include *Eight Men Out, City of Hope, A Few Good Men, Casino*, and the recently released Errol Morris documentary *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control*.

During the hiatus between *Nixon* and *U-Turn*, Richardson pulled double duty on commercials as a director/cinematographer, and also endured extensive preparation for two aborted features — Roman Polanski's *The Double* and Kathryn Bigelow's *Joan of Arc*. These prior commitments left him a mere three weeks of location prep prior to *U-Turn*'s six-week shoot, which began last November. By then, Stone, production designer Victor Kempster and producer Clayton Townsend had already scouted Superior, which lies some 60 miles outside of Phoenix.

Though Stone views *U-Turn* primarily as a thriller, Richardson recalls, "My first thoughts were, 'We have a film noir in daylight: how do we do that?' Oliver had in mind *Double Indemnity, Duel in the Sun* and *Touch of Evil*. I saw closer links to [the more recent *noirs*] *Red Rock West* and *The Hot Spot*, both of which he had never seen. But it didn't really matter, because I felt we should burn them all and go in our own direction.

"In terms of the technical problems [of shooting in Superior], the main street was situated east-to-west, and at the head of the street was a police station set against the rock bluffs of Apache Leap [a spot from which, in the 1800s, Apache tribesman committed mass suicide to avoid capture by the U.S. Cavalry]. The sun tended to rise somewhere shortly after 8:30 a.m., which meant a short shooting day. Furthermore, the west end of the street, about three to four blocks down, consisted of typical

Opposite page: ***Debt-ridden drifter Bobby Cooper (Sean Penn) faces an uncertain fate after Apache*** **femme fatale** ***Grace McKenna (Jennifer Lopez) leads him to the brink of disaster.*** **This page left:** ***Director Oliver Stone and cinematographer Robert Richardson, ASC on location in Superior, Arizona.*** **Below:** ***Shooting the perilous finale in the last days of the film's six-week production period.***

two-story, Western-style mining architecture which provided little to no cover. It would be hellish to work that location and try to create any sort of backlight. The [120-page] script was essentially set within 24 to 30 hours on a hot day in the middle of summer. We had a 36-day schedule, and were supposed to provide hot sun for almost every single scene. I was worried about achieving that technically, because the weather fluctuated so much."

Richardson continues, "I kept a journal filled with notes on lighting, stocks, filters and Polaroids of the locale, and in it I wrote that 'there's a blandness of spirit [washing over the location] that will require a Robert Adams or a Lee Freidlander to penetrate.' Both [of these still photographers] have a unique ability to break through certain locations that you would ordinarily find sterile — as in Adams' work with tract houses in deserts, or Freidlander's new book, which also captures desert landscapes. They both found very unique ways to present areas that are normally perceived to be extraordinarily common and bland.

"[At the time], I didn't know how to enhance the blandness that surrounded Superior — the parched lighting of an almost noon-day sun all day long was going to provide nothing extraordinarily beautiful. My first instinct was to go black-and-white. I wanted the harshness of the light, and thought [a monochrome stock] was better suited to the grays, blown whites and crushed blacks. I also felt that handheld 16mm would be better-suited to the speed of the production and would help to create texture."

Realizing that black-and-white films are not seen as economically viable from a marketing standpoint, Richardson began to toy with the idea of combining color footage with high-contrast black-and-white stock. Given *U-Turn*'s relatively modest budget, however, the cinematographer deep-sixed that concept and eventually wound up shooting nearly 75 percent of the picture on Kodak's 5239 color reversal stock. Rated at 160 ASA, this Ektachrome film was developed for research and design purposes: automobile manufacturers used it to document high-speed collision tests, while both NASA and the U.S. Air Force used it for on-board aircraft surveillance cameras.

Though Richardson had previously experimented with reversal stocks — in the Super 8 and 16mm formats for both *JFK* and *Natural Born Killers* — he was not overly familiar with its attributes. For advice on the finer points on this temperamental emulsion, he and Stone contacted director Spike Lee and cinematographer Malik Sayeed, who had exploited 5239 on *Clockers* (see *AC* Sept. '95). Lee had also utilized 16mm 7239 for *Get on the Bus*, photographed by Elliot Davis (see *AC* Nov. '96).

Stone himself had used reversal stocks in the early Seventies during his film school days at New York University, due to their cheap cost. He surmised that the reversal's unique qualities could compensate for the variable sunlight of an Arizona winter, as well as reflect the movie's crazy-quilt mix of both light and dark narrative tones. Richardson concurred: "Personally, I wanted to embrace the deviant nature of the stock. The characters in the film were wildly swinging, the town was wildly swinging, and almost everything within this set of circumstances sent them into sudden, unexpected 'U-turns.' So why shouldn't the film stock replicate the narrative's central tenet?

"I shot with the 5239 during all times of day, and that stock is not easy to use," the cameraman continues. "If you're shooting a scene from early morning through late afternoon, some footage might have a very cool fringe, while the rest might have a very warm fringe. The stock reacts so rapidly to any shift in color temperature that it's virtually impossible to keep a consistent look. And if you don't embrace that inconsistency as an ally, you're going to get pummeled. A lot of directors of photog-

Right: ***During Bobby's surreal trip through Superior, he seeks wisdom from a mystical Native American sage (Jon Voight) known only as "the Blind Man."*** **Below:** ***Stone confers with actors Voight and Sean Penn for a scene that Richardson lit primarily with flame bars.***

How the Southwest Was Redone

Production designer Victor Kempster has worked with director Oliver Stone on numerous productions, including *Born on the Fourth of July, JFK, Heaven and Earth, Natural Born Killers* and *Nixon*. Asked for his assessment of their latest collaboration, *U-Turn*, Kempster describes the film as "a perverse [take on] *Alice in Wonderland*, only instead of an innocent Alice you have this corrupt guy who goes to a place more loathsome and degenerate than even he can imagine."

While scouting the location where *U-Turn* would be shot — the long-abandoned mining town of Superior, Arizona — the designer decided that the locale's physical deterioration should reflect the ethical decline of its inhabitants. Although he sought to avoid the cliché of the tumbleweed-strewn, backwater Western town, Kempster believed that Superior should appear as if its architectural development had ceased sometime during the 1960s. His palette consisted of muted, sand-tinged hues which would lend the impression that Superior "was decaying into the background" of its surrounding desertscape.

Describing his approach to this bleak setting, Kempster notes, "The first look I wanted was one of sparkling decay. But I wanted it to be unified, so your eye wouldn't pop all over the place. In a way, Superior was disintegrating monolithically, like a living thing that's dying. I used a lot of stronger colors as highlights. But when Oliver and Bob [Richardson] decided to use this hot chromatic stock [cross-processed 5239 reversal film], I followed with what I understood to be the most affecting colors; the stock has such a buzzed-out, hallucinatory look that I pushed the design to become much more chromatic. [5239] tends to pick up primary colors, so I used lots of reds and blues — shades that would really glow. I tried to maintain that sense of decay, but in an augmented, hallucinatory way rather than in sense of a landscape [full of earthtones]."

U-Turn was the first film Kempster has designed to be shot with 5239, and he found that not all primary colors radiated as well as others. He recalls, "At one point, we used a very sharp, apple-green truck which, to the eye, was almost too much; it looked as if we were trying too hard, but onscreen it just fell out. On the other hand, some things would just blaze, like the red Mustang that Sean Penn drives. There are times when the car is so bright that it's like electrified blood, but it didn't look anything like that to the naked eye. And certain blue-greens were of such a strong, vibrating color that they would register just like neon.

"The real difficulties [with 5239] were caused by the disparity of going from that exterior psychocolor to the interior scenes, because it's a big change to your eye. On some levels, it worked quite well, in that it's an exaggerated reflection of what happens [to the naked eye] when you are outside in this blinding bright light and you go into a dark space. You can still see into the dark, and that's where the reversal stock seemed very interesting: you could have very shadowy play, but it didn't go black."

An example of such a jarring shift occurs early during Bobby Cooper's visit to Superior. After his Mustang breaks down, he is forced to visit the only garage in town — a less-than-reputable fix-it-shop that's basically a junkyard amidst the arid desert wastes. Kempster notes that "it looks as if you're lost in fantasy world similar to 19th-century Orientalist etchings of Egypt or Arabia, but it's [seen] through some sort of bizarre hallucinogenic element. Of course, Bob went that way too, adding green light and other effects which really make you wonder what the hell's going on. That worked really well, but it wasn't consistent, because you don't have that chromatic effect in the interior — it's just a matter of light and dark areas. You need very hot light to support the [5239] stock and get that chromatic effect. For interiors, Bob and Oliver preferred to light for shadows in more of that 1940s style — a very hard, particularized light that let objects fall off into darkness."

Prior to giving Superior it's surreal but retro facelift, Kempster perused period photographs of Main Street — from the 1920s, '40s and '60s — acquired from local residents. With these snapshots, he could chart the town's decomposition, as well as

Downtown Superior, Arizona as redressed by production designer Victor Kempster, whose muted hues implied that the defunct mining town "was decaying into the background" of the surrounding desert wasteland. Painting primary colors onto the facades, however, resulted in hyperreal highlights when combined with the effect of cross-processed 5239 reversal stock.

ascertain what was lying beneath the layers of sheet rock, plywood and molding on various buildings. Gutting some of these derelict structures revealed an abundance of history; one such "archeological" find was the Waldorf Cafe, where Bobby encounters a rogue's gallery of rather quirky characters. Kempster details, "We built the entire interior, and when we were up there rigging some of the glass [tiles for the cafe's facade], we discovered that we could see the original letters that had been on the building, underneath the areas where the paints had oxidized. I found a [matching] photograph from the Twenties, and discovered that the building had been called the Waldorf Cafe. We could actually see the letters, and since we could maintain the edges, we just painted [the signage] back on. Our painter, John Root, surmised that it must have been done [originally] by some stringer signman who came through town. He was probably given a couple of beers to paint the sign."

The lighting scheme inside the Waldorf (which was top-lit with Kino Flo flourescents and practical semi-corrected 60-watt AD bulbs) allowed Kempster to design an interior that was as outlandish as the building's exterior. He cut room for small windows into the sidewalls, as well as a larger pane in the front wall; from these vantage points, Richardson could light the space from outside with HMI fixtures. Lining the cafe's walls was a picturesque desert panorama designed from photographs; the mural was filled with chartreuse and turquoise shadings, and edged with red hues. The end result had to be color-corrected via computer in order for it to read properly onscreen.

While Kempster notes that Oliver Stone typically gives him "directed free reign" in his design work, the director's input did lead to one of Superior's quirkier elements. Running along the main street were rows of large brick planters intended for a downtown renewal project. But since these containers had never been filled with any flora, they proved to be a potentially troublesome impedement to the film's design. Because of municipal codes, the production would have had to completely reconstruct the planters to bring them in line with the film's look — at a prohibitive cost to *U-Turn*'s meager budget. Kempster recalls, "We tried to think of what to do with them, and Oliver suggested, 'Why don't you just put big cactuses into them.' I thought it was really a silly idea, but I liked it. We got some souaros, which added this sort of 'pop element' physically. It was quite funny and very incongruous, but after a while they somehow just became normal; you'd almost think it was a sophisticated thing people do around hotels out there — carefully planting desert plants, succulents and the like. But in this context it just looked peculiar, which is much better. I didn't want it to look like a new hotel in Scottsdale, but there was really no chance of that!"

— Andrew O. Thompson

raphy would never want to attack 39, because the principles of image consistency no longer apply. If you're expecting consistency, you're probably wrong to choose it — *unless* you can control it for very specific sequences."

As a case in point, the filmmakers welcomed 5239's instability for a heated confrontation scene between Bobby and Jake McKenna. The site of the scuffle — McKenna's office — was lit with a combination of bounced and direct lighting provided by four 18Ks and four 6K Pars. The first part of the argument was shot on 5293, only to be switched to 5239 when the men's rage erupted; once the feud simmered down, the cameraman returned to normal negative. The grainy texture of the 39, as well as the abrupt color shift from the smooth 93, is meant to register Bobby's feelings of paranoia and instability. Originally, this encounter was filmed as two separate incidents: the first fight began with 5293, peaked for eight shots on 5239, and then subsided with 5293; the second skirmish (which occurrs after Bobby and Grace first make love) started with the 93 and switched to the reversal stock for the rest of the scene's duration. But while editing, Stone decided to combine the sequences, resulting in an extended use of 5239 during the quarrel's flare-up.

Complicating matters for Richardson was 5239's slim exposure latitude: underexposing the film could render the image too dark to recover in timing, while overexposing it would cause the color to bleed out completely. Such traits make it difficult to manipulate 5239 in strong sunlight and shade, conditions which prevailed in Superior. Since extreme image contrast is a hallmark of classic film noir ambiance, Stone and Richardson considered applying Technicolor's ENR process to *U-Turn* in order to achieve the crushed blacks and blown-out whites characteristic of the work of master noir cinematographer John Alton. At press time, however, Richardson had concerns regarding the manner in which ENR mutes the 5239's hot, primary hues and grainy quality, and was not sure if he would actually apply the process.

Superior's resident real estate baron, Jake McKenna (Nick Nolte), is primed to settle some unfinished business.

Notes Richardson, "The cause-and-effect interaction of shooting our reversal stock in the desert was constantly evolving. The desert is a blinding place, and almost all of the characters parallel blindness in their vanity and their wants. To get the audience involved in a sensory manner, I designed a complex interaction [between the characters' questionable ideals and the properties of the 5239]. To achieve that, I started overexposing the stock by two, three, or even four stops. I felt that we had a very dark and demented love story that should break the rules of the traditional romantic love story. I wanted to enhance the bleak romantic sensibility running through the script, put *noir* back into the hearts of the characters, and let the streets burn with white-hot passion."

Stone adds, "Part of the idea [of overexposing the footage] comes from the opening of Camus' novel *The Stranger*: a guy comes to a town where the sun is beating down on his head, and he commits a murder that he can't figure out. Overexposure lends itself to the heat, and compensates for some of the cruder aspects [of the reversal stock]. The grain could sometimes get in your face — it was supposed to be gritty, but not in a documentary style. If you overexpose, however, you don't notice the loss of detail you get with reversal. On normal stock, you'd really get a nice palette from black to white, with gradations of black all the way down to white, and lots of detail. You can't do that with reversal stock, because there's no contrast: it's crude, primary and volatile, and it hits you weirdly with every different setup, depending upon where the sun is. *U-Turn* is strange film with a lot of different looks, but I'd ultimately say that visually, it's a cross between *Touch of Evil* and *Duel in the Sun*. It's all hot desert and dark blacks — desert noir or spaghetti noir."

Once 5239 had been chosen to capture some of the more surreal moments of *U-Turn*, production designer Victor Kempster altered his artistic concept of Superior, adding primary colors which would be highly accentuated by the cross-processed reversal stock (see sidebar on the film's production design). Richardson recalls, "Oliver, Victor and I decided to design a town which appeared to be bland, bleak and faded by time and sun, but still had all of these edges and highlights. Tests with the 39 definitely showed promise: the browns were left intact, while the highlight colors — reds, pinks, yellows, greens and blues — really popped. Victor's choices [for the palette] were inspired, but the tests

Slowly but surely, Bobby succumbs to Grace's intoxicating spell.

sparked him to go back and change the overall tonal quality of the facades, to enhance the yellows within them and paint in cracks. [Lead painters] John Kelly and Bill Darrow are geniuses at their craft. The 5239 grabs onto those colors, and they just snap. The end result was phenomenal."

Richardson's primary camera was a Panaflex Platinum, complemented by a high-speed Panastar for slow-motion shots, and two hand-cranked cameras — a 35mm Mitchell and a 16mm Cine-Kodak. His Primo lens package consisted of primes (most often the 21mm, 27mm and 35mm), zooms (11:1, 4:1 and 3:1) and an old, broken prime which first assistant Gregor Tavenner assembled from spare parts in the Panavision inventory. This makeshift lens produced distorted imagery.

Through shutter-angle manipulation and deft timing, Richardson used the hand-cranked cameras to produce an accordion-like "staccato" effect that stretches actors across the frame in linked multiple exposures. Richardson describes these shots as "impressionistic, expressionistic, non-parallel moments which are an interior rendering of a character laughing at you." Bobby Cooper's first sighting of Grace, for example, becomes just such a hallucinogenic mirage. This effect is also used when Bobby hauls his broken-down Mustang into the local garage, only to see "an extended slash cut to the garage attendant [Billy Bob Thornton], who is holding a gasoline pump and looking straight into camera. It's literally a hand-cranked portrait shot that double-exposes itself, and then there's a strange music cue over [the footage]. We also applied this effect when Bobby first arrives in Superior: it's a vision of moving from one end of the town to the other — all four blocks. We dollied down Main Street, hand-cranking, racing and panning across the town, double-exposing, rewinding back and ending in a close-up of Sean Penn."

Unlike most of Stone and Richardson's recent collaborations, *U-Turn* was shot in the 1.85:1 aspect ratio. One might surmise that Superior's stark environs would be best tailored to widescreen framing, but the filmmakers opted against repeating the artistic route taken in the 1954 small-town desert thriller *Bad Day at Black Rock* (photographed in CinemaScope by William C. Mellor, ASC), which they viewed during preproduction. The spherical format also facilitated the film's ample handheld shooting, which is meant to signify Bobby's erratic psyche. Richardson explains, "Neither the story nor the town lent itself to anamorphic: *U-Turn* is not a large-scale B-Western, and it certainly isn't in the vein of Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns [which were shot in Techniscope]. It made no creative sense to go with anamorphic, and the short schedule required us to shoot handheld and with zooms."

A visual reference to the Leone aesthetic is evident, however, during a scene in which Bobby ambles aimlessly across the desert after being beaten by Jake, who had discovered him in Grace's arms. The camera's POV — angled up at Bobby from a very low, slightly dutched position — creates a surreal composition of him against an expanse of blue sky. In *Nixon*, such perspectives were used to convey presidential power, but Richardson says that in *U-Turn*, this technique served as "a reflection of Leone's idea of what a gunfighter was in the West: this lone figure dwarfed by his need to carry so much magnitude and strength of character into a small arena. I was trying to pull the hard blues from above to elevate Sean Penn's character into the sky, while getting the edges of green cacti at the very bottom of the frame. At that point in the story, Bobby's anger is overwhelming. Those scenes were also shot with the staccato effect provided by the [hand-cranked cameras and] a reduced degree of shutter."

Richardson used varying shutter angles at other points in the film to invoke Bobby's disorientation within the wacky world of Superior. As he moves into town after leaving the garage, for example, two motorcyclists cut off his path in choppy frames shot with a 45-degree shutter angle. Later, as Jake offers him a ride through the desert, a melee of images shot with a 90-degree shutter — including characters' faces clashing with the background — begin to appear.

Certain in-car conversations that Bobby has with Jake and Gloria, on separate occasions, were photographed primarily in macro shots of specific body parts. The footage was later edited to form a montage of cutaways — often partial facial close-ups — of the two speakers. Richardson notes that this technique recalls artist David Hockney's still photography of

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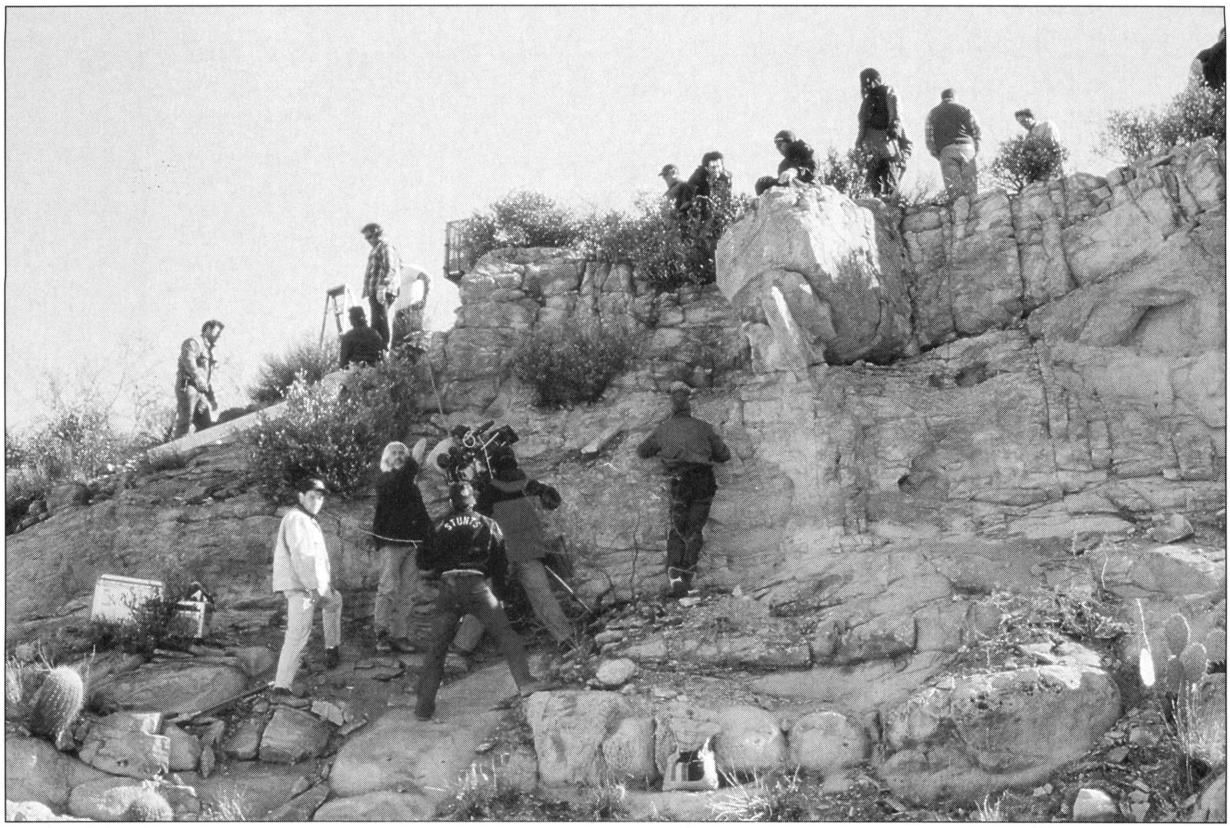

Tethered to bungee cords, the* U-Turn *crew prepares to photography the film's kinetic denouement — an homage to King Vidor's 1946 classic* Duel in the Sun *— atop a cliff on the outskirts of Superior.

desert landscapes, in which he formed portraits of the vistas by piecing together dozens of separate Polaroid snapshots. Richardson explains, "All of those little pieces we shot create attention — a shot of an eye, Gloria's hair whisping across her face, a hand on a stickshift, Bobby's eye, Jake's teeth, and finally the speedometer. These fractions tend to fill an atmosphere much more than, say, the sum of two over-the-shoulders and close-ups. In combination with soundtrack music, this technique raises the atmosphere to a more pitched level. Again, it's a textural thing — not texture in the way that film grain is texture, but texture in terms of adding to the composite image."

Though the majority of *U-Turn* occurs in daytime exteriors, there were some practical locations that required artificial illumination. Bobby's early travails include an incident in which he barges in on an armed robbery at Superior's local grocery store. Lit practically with overhead fluorescents, the store's interior has an aquamarine tint. According to gaffer Jonathan Lumley, the mini-mart's existing 4' and 8' fixtures were "adapted to take Kino Flo bulbs and ballasts so that they could shoot square-wave, high-frequency, off-speed and at the right color temperature." Background illumination was provided by a few HMI lights.

The actual stickup was shot in a jittery, handheld style, with lots of cross-cutting and rapid pans that evoke the restless POV of someone seeking escape. The tone of the scene changes when the criminals are gunned down in slow-motion. Notes Richardson, "I shot that scene on 98 and pushed it two stops. The [rapid movement] was essentially Oliver's idea; it was a Godardian style. He thought that we should work with a slightly longer lens and make snap moves to and off all the action. Sometimes we only had fractions of a sentence of dialogue before we left a shot."

Principal photography on *U-Turn* extended to four days over the 36-day schedule, due to the difficulties of shooting the climax on location within a series of nearly inaccessible canyons and cliffs. Stone views the high-octane conclusion — a perilous standoff between Bobby and Grace — as an homage to *Duel in the Sun*. "We were trying to maintain a Hitchcockian intimacy in a very rugged setting, and that takes time," he says.

The area's topography limited available daylight to a mere four hours. Shooting the scene additionally required actors Penn and Lopez — along with various crew members — to be dangled along the cliff face on bungee cords.

Though this region was favored by the director, Richardson found it to be rather problematic from a cinematographic standpoint. He recalls, "The sun would appear in a valley to the east of a very high cliff, and did not rise over [the precipice] until almost 10:50 a.m., so it wouldn't hit the rocks below. Then the sun would go behind the mountain and put the valley in shadow again at around 3:20 p.m. But we were able to get certain shots before 9 a.m. by moving to an another area which got morning light, [a half-mile from the principal location]."

The final days of production were spent on a night scene that began in the McKenna home, which was situated on the edge of a sheer rock face and extended into

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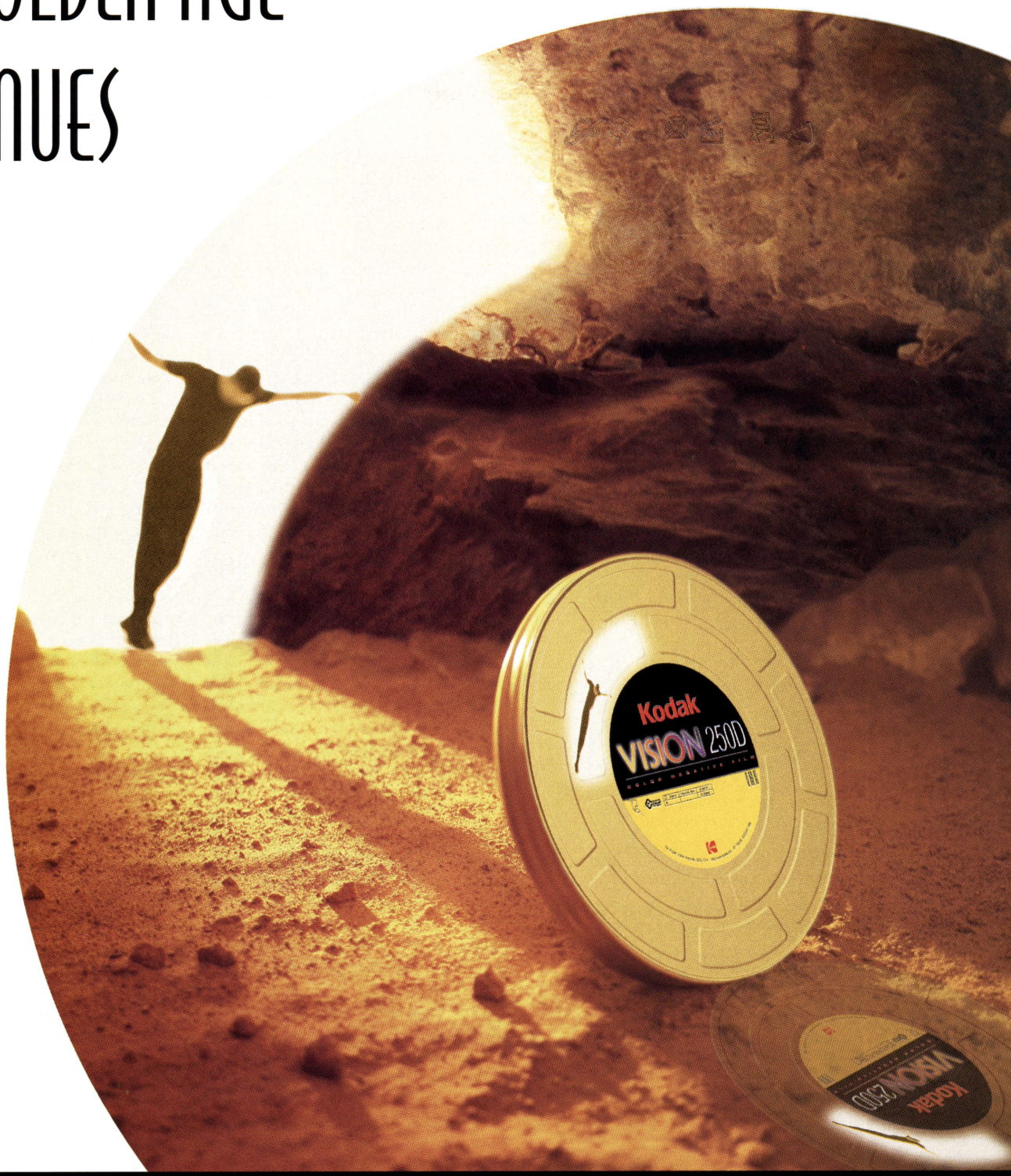

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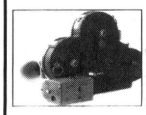

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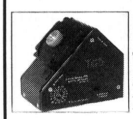

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the ravine area where Bobby and Grace have their standoff the following morning. Richardson's design for the nocturnal ambiance was "almost hallucinatory in visual style in that it would become difficult to discern between day and night. I pumped extraordinarily harsh white light into the room through the windows during the final night confrontation between Grace, Bobby and Jake. By pushing the [5298] one to two stops, I required very little light to get to that point. Once we exited the house, the atmosphere would be hot and burning in places which made no sense. When we hit the desert, I intended to use large lighting rigs that would explode the flat landscape to almost five stops over in the foreground, and then let the background slide off into deep black. I was attempting to create a pseudo-5239 effect in terms of contrast, knowing that I could maintain the color rendering you'd get from the 98 if we used the ENR process later."

In offering advice to other directors of photography interested in employing 5239 on a project, Richardson notes that the cross-processing procedure requires a separate bath that includes formaldehyde. Due to the hazards entailed with the disposal of this toxic chemical, its use is restricted by California state regulations and the Environmental Protection Agency. Processing of the stock was therefore handled out of state.

Ultimately, Richardson was unable to complete the final photography on *U-Turn* due to a prior commitment to director Barry Levinson's project *Wag the Dog*. When shooting resumed in the desert outside of Los Angeles after the winter holidays, cinematographic chores were assumed by Jeff Kimball. Richardson was also unavailable to supervise the timing process after going on location in Montana to shoot *The Horse Whisperer* for director Robert Redford. Although he said that he would have a chance to make a quick pass at *U-Turn* upon completion of this latest project, the cinematographer had to rely primarily upon the assistance of Bob Kaiser, head timer of Technicolor Los Angeles, and associate producer Bill Brown. Also of concern to Richardson is the longevity of the camera negative itself, since the reversal stock was not designed with archival concerns in mind. Brown explains, "5239 was designed for VNF processing, which has formaldehyde in the stabilization bath, and because we are cross-processing it and treating it as a normal negative, it's going through the ENC process, which doesn't have any formaldehyde. The stabilization of the negative is therefore a concern. To help alleviate this problem, we processed the footage normally [as neg] and then subsequently fixed it in formaldehyde. But the scary thing about it is that there isn't any solid knowledge about what will happen to this stock over the long term.

"We did a series of tests, because the filmmakers were worried about a quick fade — 24 to 48 hours after it was shot and developed — and found that the negative was probably within a couple of points [of their original intent]. But we're more concerned about what will happen 15 years down the road. I'll feel a lot better when we have IPs and YCM separations of this footage."

Kaiser, who is timing 5239 for the first time, adds, "It's hard to control; it puts us at a really high scale that most laboratories probably couldn't reach. We've noticed a difference between where it printed when they were shooting, and where it is now [in early August], after it's all been cut and we're starting to time it. The magenta lights were in the 40s, and now they're in the 70s."

Regardless of these technical hurdles, Stone and Richardson both feel that they achieved their goals for the picture. Notes the director, "In spite of all the difficulties we went through at the beginning of the shoot, primarily the concerns regarding this reversal stock, Mike Medavoy at Phoenix Pictures really got behind us, and Technicolor was wonderful in working out the problems with our answer print. At the end of the day, I can say that I'm pleased with the way that *U-Turn* turned out." ◆

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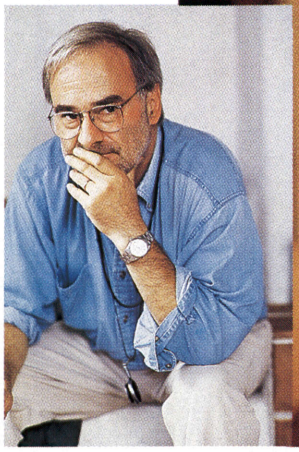
Exposing Hollywood's Sordid Past

Director Curtis Hanson and cinematographer Dante Spinotti, AIC add a realistic touch to the film noir world of *L.A. Confidential*.

by Eric Rudolph



Right: L.A. Confidential's *introductory shot of Lynn Bracken (Kim Basinger), a high-class hooker who dolls herself up to resemble Forties' film noir icon Veronica Lake.* Below: *Italian cinematographer Dante Spinotti, AIC.*

Photos by Merrick Morton and Peter Sorel, courtesy of Warner Bros.

In 1953, the post-war boom was in full swing, particularly in Los Angeles, where wide new freeways and sprawling suburbs were dramatically reshaping the idea of the American dream. Boosters worked overtime to draw ex-GI's and their growing families to the sun and fun of L.A., touting the town's celebrity residents and wonderful weather.

This paradise-on-earth veneer is as thin as a quick coat of varnish in *L.A. Confidential*, a screen adaptation of James Ellroy's novel of ambition and corruption run wild. Ellroy's dark world has been vividly brought to life onscreen by director Curtis Hanson (*The Hand that Rocks the Cradle, The River Wild*) and Italian cinematographer Dante Spinotti, AIC, whose credits include *The Last of the Mohicans* (for which he earned a 1992 ASC Award nomination, see *AC* Dec. 1992), *Manhunter, Beaches, Crimes of the Heart, Frankie and Johnny, True Colors, The Quick and the Dead, Nell, Heat* (see *AC* Jan. '96) and *The Mirror Has Two Faces*.

Although the setting and themes of *L.A. Confidential* are classic film noir, devotees of the genre who are expecting an updated version of the highly stylized and shadowy work of master noir cinematographers such as John Seitz, ASC (*Double Indemnity, Sunset Boulevard*) and John Alton (*The Spiritualist, He Walked by Night*) will have to look elsewhere. Hanson explains, "When people hear 'early Fifties' and 'Los Angeles' they think about *The Big Sleep, Chinatown* and the world of Philip Marlowe from the Thirties and Forties. Our goal with *L.A. Confidential* was to be faithful to the period without telling the story through a lens of nostalgia. We didn't want to create an homage to the film noirs of the past, nor did we want the period to be in the foreground. We wanted the emotion and the action to be front-and-center."

Rather than screening film noir classics for visual inspiration, Hanson and Spinotti pored over the work of Swiss-born still photographer Robert Frank. They were particularly intrigued by Frank's 1958 book *The Americans*, a collection of gritty, startling black-and-

white photographs documenting American life during the the mid-Fifties. Recalls Hanson, "I had seen an exhibition of the photographs Frank took across America in 1955 and 1956. They were of the period, but had a contemporary look and feel. We wanted the same look for *L.A. Confidential*. Dante just leapt on the idea of approaching each scene in the film as if it were a Robert Frank still."

Spinotti found himself moved by Frank's "strong selection of elements, his way of bringing symbols into the shots. His work is passionate, but it is passion filtered with intellect. On *L.A. Confidential*, I tried to compose shots as if I were using a still camera. I was constantly asking myself, 'Where would I be if I were holding a Leica?' This is one reason I suggested shooting in the Super 35 widescreen format; I wanted to use spherical lenses, which for me have a look and feel similar to still-photo work. We would also be shooting a lot at night. With anamorphic lenses, which we used on *Heat*, you are limited to a stop of f5.6; with spherical lenses you can open up to f2.8, 2.3 or more and still get a very sharp image. We also wanted to have the ability to move around and use Steadicam, which is easier with spherical lenses."

The director and cinematographer agreed that Robert Frank's influence resonates in almost every aspect of the film's look, from lighting and camera angles to the selection of locations. Spinotti was particularly fascinated by the photographer's inclusion of "practical" lights in his photographs, noting, "I told the production designer, 'You will love this film, because what you select as practicals will be our major sources of light.' In fact, practicals were quite often our key lights on this film."

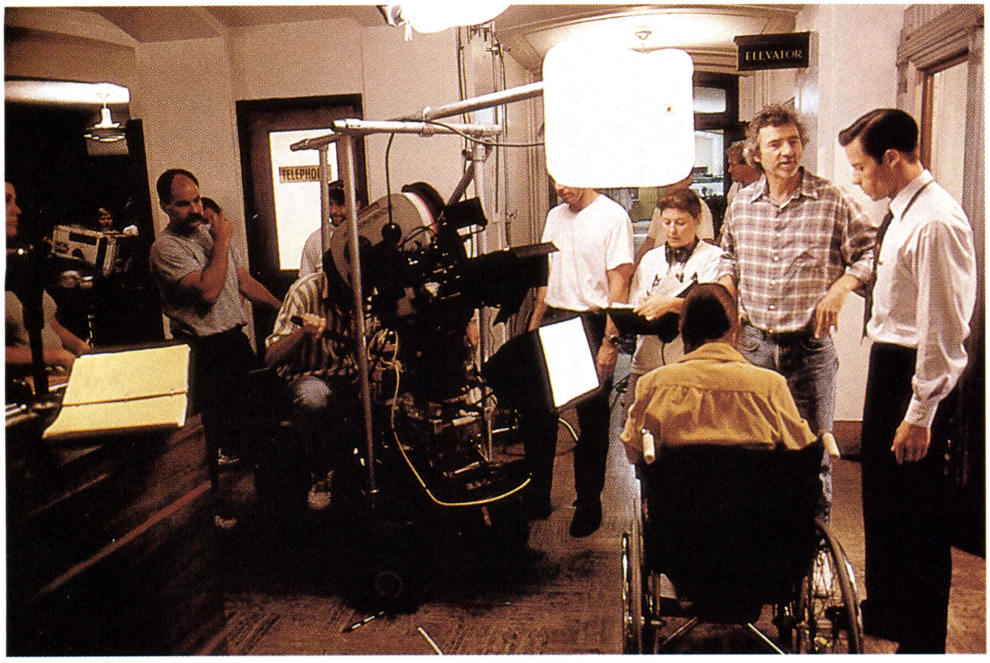
Hanson adds, "The selection and employment of practicals on *L.A. Confidential* was critical; our location scouts were told to look for opportunities to utilize practicals for the actual lighting when they selected locations."

Frank's 35mm black-and-white photographs in *The Americans* were all taken with available illumination, usually in very low-light situations (a tactic that required audacity and great skill, due to the limits of the era's relatively slow-speed film). His light sources — whether a glaring bank of overhead fluorescents in a gritty cowboy bar in Gallup, New Mexico, or candlelight at a high-society charity ball in New York City — were often included in the photographs, and became an important part of the compositions.

Was Spinotti concerned about the problem of practical key lights "burning out" on screen? "No," he answers. "In fact, I wish I could have burned them out more, because I like that look. As you look at Frank's photographs, you see there is often a halo around the lights. These halos are one of the things people are often struck by in his work. I think that 'burn-outs' and halos worked for us as well in *L.A. Confidential*, enhancing the period and mood."

Practical fixtures have their limitations, of course, and Spinotti bolstered them with the extensive use of one of his favorite lighting tools: bat strips. These fixtures are 4'- to 8'-long strips of reflector floodlight bulbs, often R-20's, mounted very close together. "I call bat strips my 'no-light lights,'" says the cinematographer. "We hung them in corners of

Above: ***Hard-boiled detective Bud White (Russell Crowe) ponders clues to the murder of Sid Hudgeons after finding the tabloid editor's corpse in his office at the celebrity rag Hush-Hush.***
Left: ***Investigator Ed Exley (Guy Pearce), the despised golden boy of the LAPD, is grilled by the top brass of L.A.'s municipal government. This scene displays Spinotti's deft use of a one-way mirror to provide a forceful double image of both the inquistors and the accused.***



Above: ***An interior is illuminated with a Chimera softbox, which Spinotti often employed to provide a more-angled directional light.*** **Right:** ***Kevin Spacey as crooked gumshoe Jack Vincennes, a celebrity-struck cop who's drunk with the power generated by his gig as advisor to a*** **Dragnet-***type TV drama.*

rooms, near the ceiling aimed down at the actors, especially when space was at a premium. They create a very soft fill or back light which works wonderfully on furniture and hair. They were very effective on Kim Basinger's blonde hair. The trick is to keep the R-20 bulbs close to each other, about a half-centimeter apart, so they don't cast multiple shadows, but rather produce one long line of soft light. We also used bat strips vertically when we were tight for space; they helped us to light actors in full-body shots."

L.A. Confidential centers on three Los Angeles police detectives. The first, Jack Vincennes (Kevin Spacey), is a cop who has "gone Hollywood." He serves as the technical advisor to a *Dragnet*-type television show, and covets the cult of celebrity provided by this gig. Vincennes also specializes in drug and morals busts meticulously engineered by pioneering tabloid editor Sid Hudgeons (Danny DeVito), who gleefully reports on the arrests in his tell-all rag. Vincennes is rewarded with fame and large-denomination bills passed on furtively by Hudgeons.

The crooked Vincennes becomes embroiled in a murder investigation that links him tragically with two fellow detectives: the thoughtful, bespectacled Ed Exley (Guy Pearce) and tough-guy

Bud White (Russell Crowe). Matters are complicated by the imprisonment of a Mafia drug kingpin, whose illicit empire suddenly goes up for grabs. Exley and White soon become dangerously linked to one another through their shared relationship with high-class prostitute Lynn Bracken (Kim Basinger), and the fact that they both know who has assumed command of the lucrative drug empire.

The world of *L.A. Confidential* is one in which reality is constantly shifting. Reasons Hanson, "A key theme of this film is the difference between appearance and reality, such as the contrast of L.A. as this glorious fantasy land with its gritty commercial reality.

"We had a beautiful opportunity to examine this theme through Kim Basinger's character, Lynn Bracken, a prostitute who makes herself over to look like the glamorous Forties movie star Veronica Lake," Hanson adds. "With Bracken we were able to emphasize that nothing is what it seems to be, and also highlight the difference between traditional film noir cinematography and our much more naturalistic approach."

This contrast is presented visually in one particularly clever scene. "When we first meet Bracken, she is screening the 1942 Veronica Lake-Alan Ladd film *This Gun for Hire* [photographed by John Seitz, ASC] in her living room," Hanson notes. "We see Lake and Ladd onscreen, lit in that wonderful classic Forties noir style. After a camera move, Kim appears, lit in our style, right in front of Veronica Lake's image. You see that this image on the movie screen is what Basinger's character is pretending to be. You also see the classic look of 1940s film noir, directly contrasted by Dante's more naturalistic approach, and it becomes clear that we are doing something different in *L.A. Confidential*."

Despite his departure from the classic film noir style, Spinotti did include some traditional motifs in his overall photographic approach, such as the occasional appearance of menacing, exaggerated shadows, or shadows cast on walls by venetian blinds. One of the more notable visual aspects of *L.A. Confidential* is the cinematographer's use of darkness to surround and highlight the most important aspect of each scene, much in the way that early filmmakers actually vignetted the edges of a scene to emphasize its vital elements. He explains, "I like to shoot dark images. I'm drawn to the mystery of darkness with brightness in the center; that's instinctive to me."

Hanson was impressed with Spinotti's dedication to the realistic visual approach they developed. The director offers, "The thing that was striking about Dante was the consistency with which he went after this naturalistic feel. His

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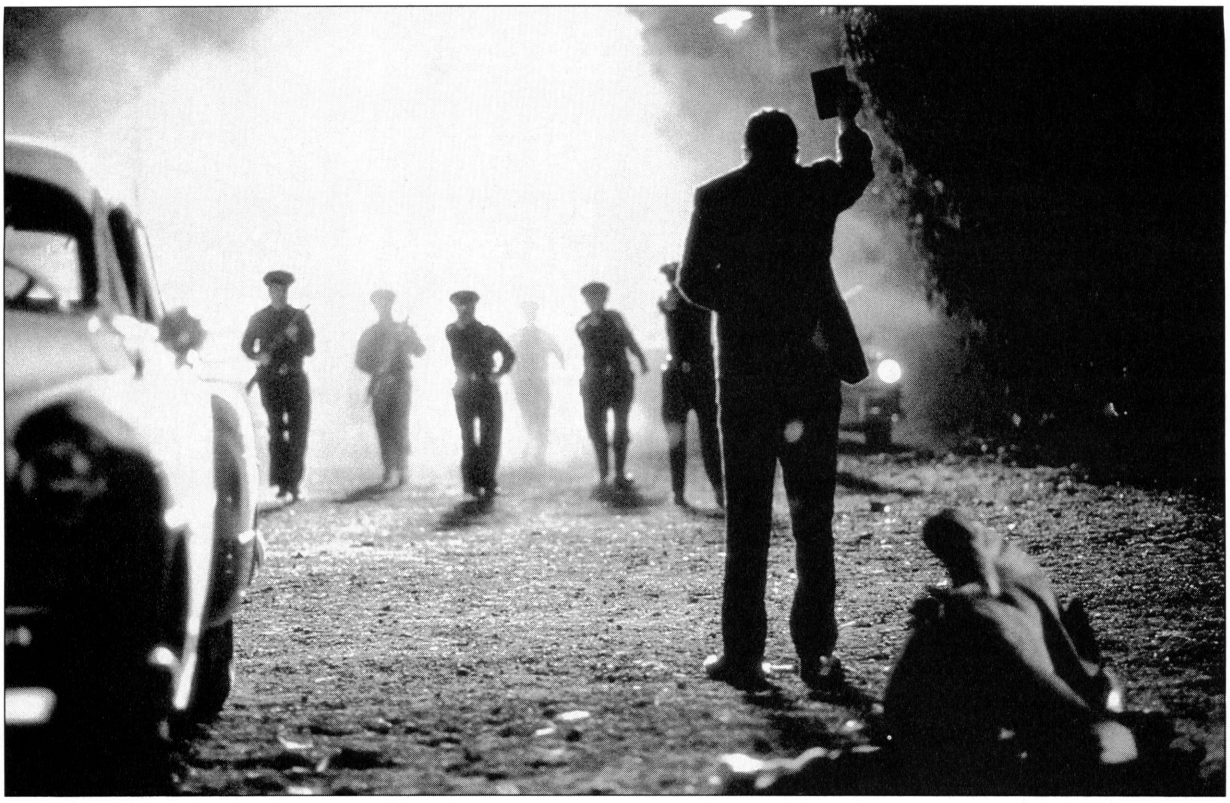

Materializing in dusty silhouette, LAPD officer Ed Exley (Guy Pearce) flashes his badge to halt oncoming officers after the film's climactic shootout. This confrontation was one of many sequences in which Spinotti used darkness to demarcate the visual crux of the scene.

basic approach in *L.A. Confidential* was to employ strong source light, be it a large window or a house lamp, and then very specifically work from that as the key light. He augmented and enhanced the practical key lights as needed, but kept everything he added to a bare minimum, so you get the feeling that nothing is being done. This approach, where the style is defined by the apparent absence of style, can be quite effective. The cumulative effect is that you realize that someone did something rather remarkable. The photography is exciting, and it adds to the veracity of the story."

The filmmakers' emphasis on naturalism, subtlety and practicals did not prevent Spinotti from creating some memorable fantasy images, however. In a scene that leads to the initial coupling of Lynn Bracken and Bud White, the cameraman thoroughly dispenses with reality in favor of romanticism. "Bud comes in through Lynn's downstairs living room, where she has her 'working' bed," Spinotti details. "The room is lit with an HMI placed outside the large window, gelled with quarter to half blue. This blue environment looks a little bit like an aquarium."

A striking addition to the cool bluish light downstairs is a flame-like play of brilliant pink and orange light. Spinotti created this richly colored splash after he noticed that a light planned for a high position worked more effectively low to the ground. "To mimic the sun, I had a Xenon light that was going to be placed high up on a Condor outside of the house's big windows. However, when we lit the Xenon while it was still on the ground, we saw that it produced this striking effect of sunlight coming through the big window at an extremely low angle. I liked it and left the light down low, adding orange and magenta gels. The result is this really unusual effect of a very low early-morning sun that is pink and orange at same time, rather than just yellow."

When the couple enter Bracken's upstairs bedroom, the warm, low-angled pink and orange light becomes much more pronounced, playing dramatically against the walls and creating a strong contrast to the cool blue that dominates the previously seen "business" bedroom.

Due to scheduling conflicts, the lighting for Basinger's close-up had to be created on the fly. Recalls Spinotti, "We shot Kim without the benefit of tests, and this underlined for me the fact that you have to find the proper way to light each and every face, no matter how beautiful. I tried several approaches, but the best involved keeping the light on the same side of her face as the camera. We normally employed a soft front light placed at a very slight side angle. For further direction of the light, we used either a Chimera soft box fitted with a honeycomb grid, or Chimera Chinese lanterns. We had three or four Chinese lanterns of different sizes; they work well if one can get the right low angle.

"We also used a small Dedo eyelight on a dimmer above the lens for Kim," he adds. "I always keep my eyelight a half-inch or so off the axis of lens, on the side away from the key light. The Dedo eliminates small skin problems and adds brilliance to the face and eyes. We also used a low-angle reflector and occasionally a very light Mitchell filter on the lens. Of course, the fact that we were shooting in Super 35, with its additional resolution-reducing optical step,

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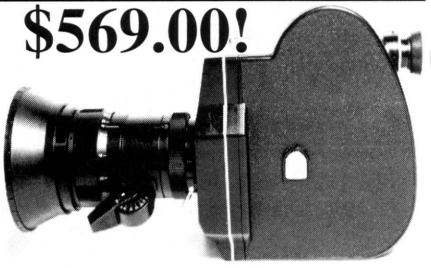

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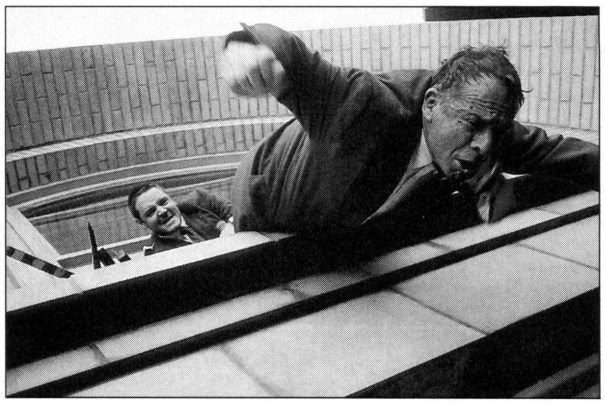


On- and off-screen views of Officer White dangling D.A. Ellis Lowe (Ron Rifkin) from a ledge to coerce a confession about the LAPD's role in the Mafia drug trade.

kept our need for lens diffusion to a minimum."

Hanson notes that Spinotti also made extensive use of reflections. The director recalls, "The key moment for Vincennes occurs when he has taken $100 from Hudgeons [after setting up a district attorney in a homosexual situation, with tragic results]. Sitting in a bar, Vincennes looks in the mirror and is filled with self-loathing. In previous sequences we had seen him checking himself out in mirrors, and in effect responding, 'Aren't I cool?' Dante skillfully used reflections to help emphasize the dualities that run throughout the story from beginning to end, without drawing attention to the technique in what could have been a distracting way."

Key scenes that occur in a police interrogation room employed a clever use of one-way mirrors to keep both sides of the story planted firmly in the viewer's mind. Says Spinotti of this setup, "We took a one-way mirror and positioned the reflecting side so that it faced the room in which the cops were observing the suspects. That allowed me to create a strong, detailed double image; the image in the glass is the reverse of real-life, and you can clearly see the corrupt cops' complicated reactions to the interrogations. You are also able to see the suspects, because they are strongly lit by a single practical bulb that hangs very close to their faces."

Another unusual touch for a period piece such as *L.A. Confidential* is the cinematographer's liberal use of fluorescent fixtures. Hanson notes, "The story is set in 1953, not the Forties, so while fluorescents had not yet taken over, they were in use. Fluorescents helped us underline a key theme, that of the new world rolling over the old Los Angeles, a place that had been so unique. Many things that are so commonplace now —

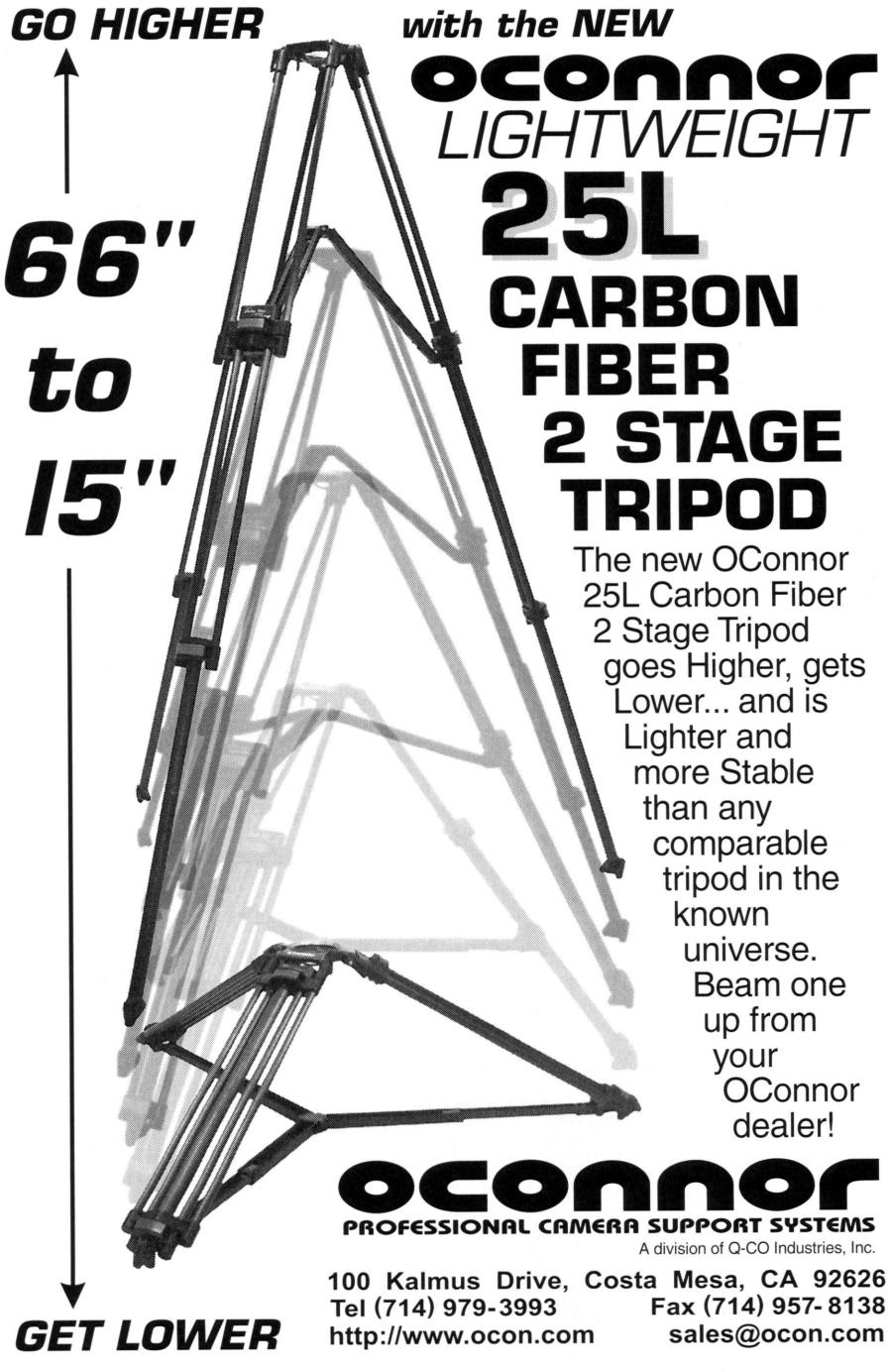
such as glaring fluorescent lights, tabloid journalism, the suburbs, and television — were all new in the early 1950s."

Most scenes in the film's police headquarters have a moderate greenish tinge from the strong overhead fluorescent practicals. Fluorescents were also used to create a subtle effect during a crucial speech delivered by Exley, in which he denotes his deeply personal reasons for joining the police force. The scene is staged in an old-fashioned homicide squad room. Behind Exley lies a large open area bathed in greenish fluorescent lights; their presence is further emphasized by the low-angled, long-lens perspective of the camera. Exley is tightly framed by the fluorescents, which are several stops over the scene's exposure. This striking tableau effectively highlights the less attractive — but imminent and highly efficient — wavelength of the future, thus bolstering one of Hanson's key themes.

Spinotti's naturalistic approach is carried to a powerful extreme in a climactic scene during which White and Exley are ambushed by some scoundrels, who subsequently trap them in a room at an old motel. "To defend themselves, they close all the doors and windows so the shooters won't know where they are in the room," says the cameraman. "Our key light for this interior scene was a 20K on a Condor way out in front of the motel. We let it go very dark in that room. This was one of the rare times I extensively underexposed [the scene] by as much as one to two stops. Sometimes I would include some brightness in the scene, but that was kept to a minimum. It turned out to be a nice exercise, because a good deal of the action happens in shadow; you can barely see the faces or the action, but it works."

The 20K key light was supplemented, but only in a minor and motivated manner. "We did place a 10K outside near the back window of the room; it was justified by a streetlamp that we placed with the production designer."

The addition of dust to this sequence, ostensibly generated



by a barrage of bullets that breaks up the old wooden walls, helped add some definition to shafts of light filtering into the room from the 20K outside. The large exterior key source was also slightly augmented inside the room with a 500-watt Dedo bounced off of a Rosco screen. "When the walls and windows are broken by the gunfire, more light from the 20K comes into the room, and you start to see more detail," Spinotti notes. "On the exterior, we kept the big key light low so we had a dramatic shadow-line halfway up the walls. When the main bad guys finally comes into the room, the top portion of his body is in deep shadow."

The dark color palette of *L.A. Confidential* may receive some enhancement from the use of Technicolor's ENR process. Spinotti explains, "While the film was not shot for an ENR release, I kept in the back of my mind that it was a possibility. We tested the process for *L.A. Confidential*, and it was extremely successful, so we are hoping that 100 or more of the prints will receive a light ENR treatment.

"ENR is a very interesting process which adds sharpness and depth to the blacks, as well as an elegant, three-dimensional quality overall; your tones pick up energy. If we do get these 100 or so ENR prints, the effect will not be too overly dramatic. In the case of *L.A. Confidential*, ENR would be used simply to help us get a better print. But the process is expensive and takes time, so sometimes it doesn't get done even when it's planned."

Spinotti says that he is impressed with Kodak's Vision 500T 5279 high-speed stock, but still opted to use the 200 ASA 5293 as often as possible on *L.A. Confidential*. "I tried to use 93 whenever I could," he says. "Its beauty is hard to surpass. The richness of 93's blacks and skin tones, and the quality of the colors, is wonderful. When an actor goes from light to shadow and back, the color doesn't change as the exposure goes up and down the curve. The 79 was impressive; it held the highlights and has fine grain, which was very good for Super 35. However, 93 still has an edge with its rich blacks. On *L.A. Confidential*, we ended up shooting approximately 60 percent of the film with 5279 and 40 percent with 5293."

Spinotti tends to underrate his respective stocks. "I like strong blacks and contrast, so I usually expose [5279] at 400 ASA," he explains. "I'll go as high as 500 occasionally, as I have found that the 79 is more sensitive than the old 5298. I also overexpose when I use 5293, unless I have a very high-key scene; I'm usually rating it at about 160, but it varies."

The cinematographer's drive for contrast is further enhanced by his choice of labs. He prefers to print at Technicolor Los Angeles, "with a 34-35 light on the average. To get the same results at other labs, they have to print in the low 40's. Technicolor L.A. just produces more contrast, which I have found that I like; the colors are right there, big and bright."

For stylistic and practical reasons, wide angles prevailed on *L.A. Confidential*. Spinotti says that this tendency was "part of our plan to achieve a still-photo look. We

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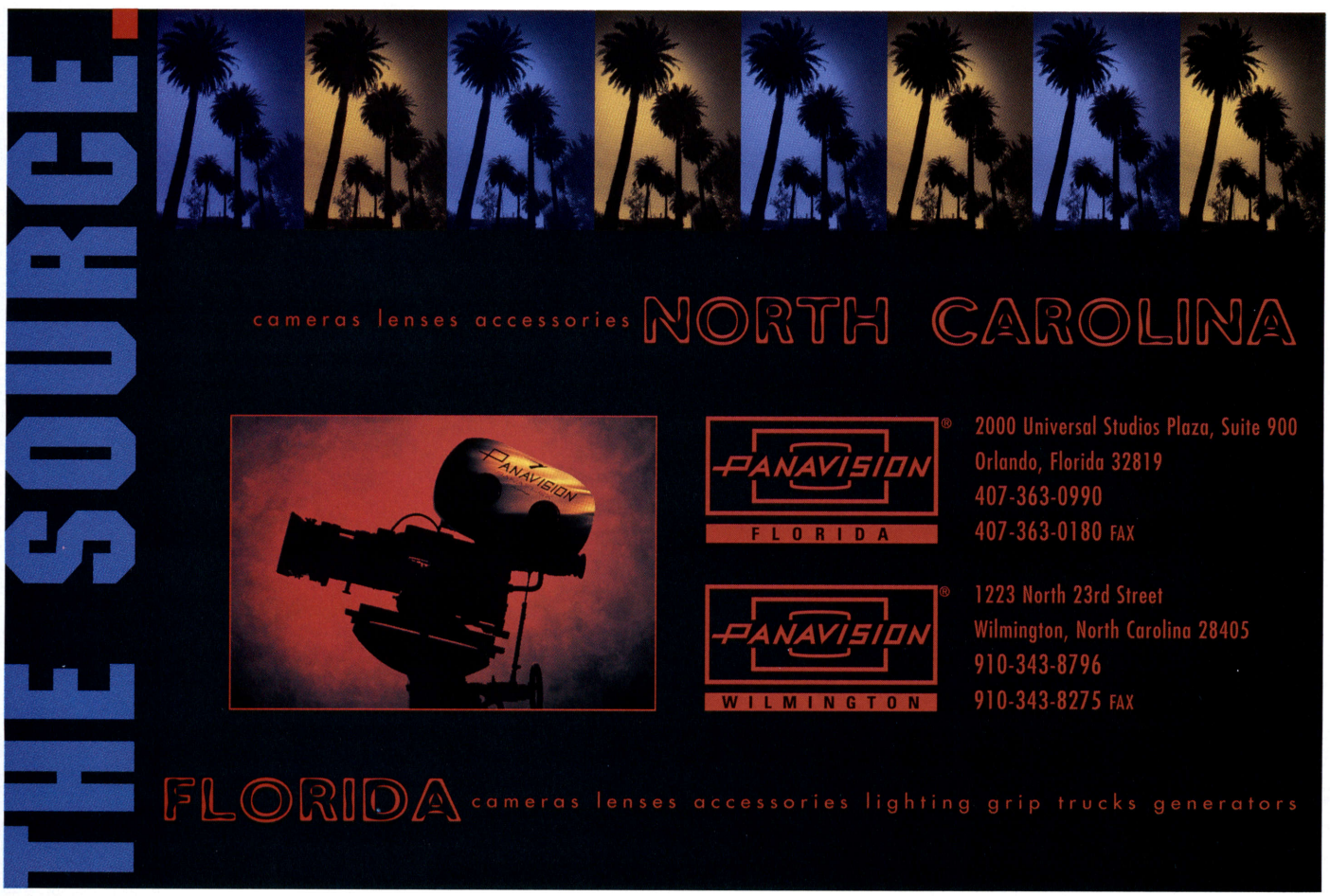
used a lot of wide Panavision primes, such as the 21mm T2.8 MKII, but nothing wider. The primes were mostly used for night interiors and exteriors, because we needed lenses we could open up.

"We used the Panavision short and super Primo zooms, the 17.5-75mm T2.3 and the 24mm-275mm T2.8, both of which work very well. We also used some long lenses. We had great cooperation from Panavision Tarzana, as we have come to expect."

Spinotti's A-camera was a Platinum Panaflex; a Lightweight Panaflex was used with the Steadicam (deftly operated by Jimmy Muro) and a Golden Panaflex served as the show's B-camera. Gary Jay was the A-camera operator, while Peter Gulla operated the B-camera and Dwayne Manwiller served as the "magic focus-puller."

While the Italian-born Spinotti acknowledges the fine work being done by crews in his native land, he says that he has developed a great regard for American camera teams and enjoys working on stateside productions. "These Hollywood crews always amaze me with their ability to cope with problems," he attests. "You get a lot more freedom working with a crew of this caliber. I know I can shoot actors walking toward the camera with a 300mm lens wide open at f2.8 and stay in focus. Of course, there may be one take where the actors are a little soft, but the assistant cameraman has invariably warned the script supervisor, so any unpleasant surprises are very rare!" ◆

Tabloid journalist Sid Hudgeons (Danny DeVito) arrives at a scene where an actor and his moll have been busted.



Photos by Barry Wetcher, courtesy of Fox Searchlight

Reflections on an Era

Cinematographer Fred Elmes, ASC creates a sensuous semblance of the 1970s for director Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm*.

by David E. Williams

Though widely reviled for its excesses, the 1970s is a decade that continues to resonate. In his 1994 novel *The Ice Storm*, author Rick Moody detailed his observations of that period with a tale set in the suburban "utopia" of New Canaan, Connecticut — revealing how the various social revolutions of the day took their toll on the Nuclear Family.

Adapted for the screen by writer/producer James Schamus and directed by Ang Lee (collaborators on *Pushing Hands*, *Eat Drink Man Woman* and *Sense and Sensibility*), *The Ice Storm* presents interweaving tales of experimentation and discovery, as the Hood family and their neighbors, the Carvers, slide into a permissive nirvana. Ben and Elena Hood (Kevin Kline and Joan Allen) are at a crossroads; she is growing more fed up as he clumsily couples with the predatory Janey Carver (Sigourney Weaver). Their pubescent daughter, Wendy (Christina Ricci), seeks control in her life by toying with the hapless Mikey and Sandy Carver (Elijah Wood and Adam Hann-Byrd). Meanwhile, Paul Hood (Tobey Maguire) attempts to woo a prep-school coed, embarking on his first escapades with love and controlled substances. Ultimately, Elena and the workaholic Jim Carver (Jamey Sheridan) painfully shed their own inhibitions after they are paired off at a wife-swapping party. Lee notes, "The movie makes parallels between the parents' and the kids' behavioral patterns. Like father, like son; like mother, like daughter."

Ben Hood (Kevin Kline) begins to bore Janey Carver (Sigourney Weaver) with his angst-laden pillow talk.

These tenuous relationships are ultimately tested as a severe winter tempest plunges New Canaan into a deep freeze, which awakens everyone to the fact that their infidelities and self-involvement must take a back seat to familial bonds. On a wry note, the director offers, "I sometimes thought of *The Ice Storm* as a disaster movie, except that the disaster hits home! In a way, the storm is a parallel and a metaphor for the human drama as we watch these human-nature, family and relationship disasters take place."

Notes Schamus, "The biggest hurdle in adapting the book was to create, in a visual way, the emotional effect that the book accomplished through the use of [the narrator's] voice. Without demeaning anything else Ang and I have done, I think this film is the most cinematic film he has ever made, precisely because it manages to overcome this problem in a way that's almost unnoticeable to an untrained eye."

While seeking a director of photography for *The Ice Storm*, Lee and Schamus met with some 20 cinematographers — a procedure they had also gone through on *Sense and Sensibility*. After careful consideration, they chose Fred Elmes, ASC. Lee offers, "The films Fred made with David Lynch had made a strong impression on us, but *The Ice Storm* was very different from those pictures. There was also a need for darkness, though not so much in terms of content; we wanted to experiment with how dark things could go. Coming off *Sense and Sensibility*, which was very classic, saturated and almost in the style of [17th-century Dutch artist] Vermeer, I was looking for someone experimental and independent in spirit. But I also needed an experienced cinematographer who would shoot *Ice Storm* in a way that would benefit the film's ideas."

Elmes is well known for his contributions to some unique features. He won the National Film Critics Award for *Blue Velvet*, and earned IFP Spirit Awards for *Wild*

at Heart and *Night on Earth*. His resumé also includes *Opening Night, Eraserhead, Valley Girl* and *The Saint of Fort Washington*. He was recently honored with an Emmy nomination for his work on first-time director Christopher Reeve's HBO telefilm *In the Gloaming* (see *AC* May '97 and item in this issue on p. 80).

"I was very pleased by Fred's willingness to experiment," Lee confirms, "especially in terms of using gels or pushing to see how dark a scene could go. There were times when Fred would say, 'Come on Ang, don't chicken out — let's try it!' And it usually worked."

In preparing for the job, Elmes first read an early version of James Schamus' script. "I then went to the novel, so Ang and I could talk further about the moods and feelings we wanted to capture," the cameraman says. "It's important to go back to the roots of a story. In this case, I wanted to understand the author's sense of the Seventies in New Canaan. The novel gave us a lot to talk about in terms of back story.

"When I read a script, I always look for characters, and *The Ice Storm* is definitely a character-driven story," he adds. "I was also intrigued because it was set in the Seventies, when there was a great deal of turmoil in the country. The characters' process of discovery is set against a backdrop of political corruption, exemplified by Watergate. And then there is the ice storm itself, which is a distinct character in the picture. The first half of the film has an innocence about it, and then in the second half nature steps in and overwhelms everything."

Elmes was one of the last people to join *The Ice Storm*'s creative team, giving him scant time to prepare for the project. He recalls, "Just after I was hired, Ang assembled all of the key production people for an entire day of just talking the story through. This group included James Schamus, production designer Mark Friedberg, costume designer Carol Oditz, and a researcher, Jean Castelli, who was very helpful in gathering information about what was happening around the world during the Seventies in art, fashion, pop culture and politics. The discussion helped me understand more about each character, and how Ang felt about all aspects of the production as they contributed to the story."

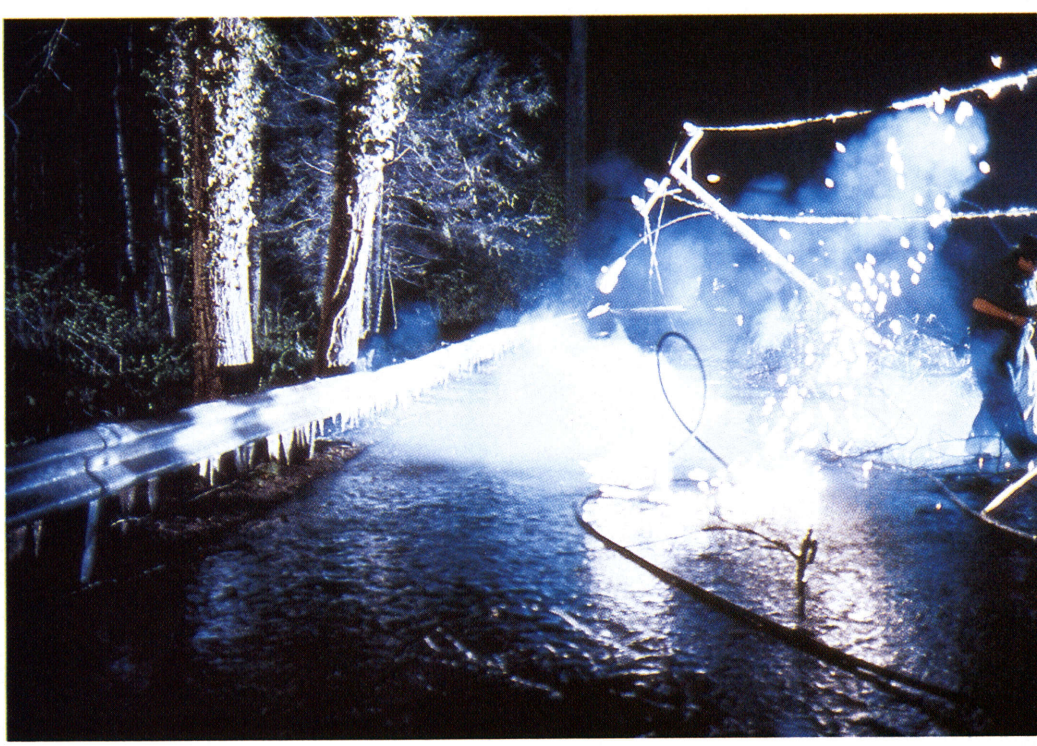
During this meeting, the film's visual approach was delineated in distinct halves. Schamus recalls, "Part of our discussion was Ang's fixation on doing the first half of the film in a very photo-realistic style."

The director explains, "Art direction and cinematography usually work to support the actors, but I wanted our settings and their look to represent an obstacle to humanity. I tried to build this tacky world in the first half of the film, which is how the notion of photo-realism came into my mind. By 'photo-realism,' I mean a removed, intensely objective view of things, including people. That required higher contrast, a lot of reflective material such as glass and metals, and a lot of defocused subjects and negative space in the compositions to distract the audience and force them to become more analytical."

"Ang and I both latched onto the photo-realist painters of the Seventies as a visual key for the film," confirms Elmes. "We looked at many paintings from that era — for example, the work of Ralph Goings, who painted diners with fantastic detail, color and light. We also looked at the work of still photographers who were imitating the photo-realist painters at the time."

The second half of the picture "would rely more on a sort of impressionism," Lee contends. "The ice storm and the force of nature suggested that."

Through these early production meetings, "We soon found



Left: ***Director Ang Lee (left) and cinematographer Fred Elmes scope out a location.*** **Below:** ***New Canaan's winter wonderland becomes a treacherous trap when a power line collapses.***

Lee and Elmes used reflective surfaces to add an air of detachment and depth to their characters' plight. Here, Ben Hood attempts to divine the turns his life will take as he loiters within the glassy confines of the Carvers' house. Note the image of the forest and sky in the window's upper right corner.

a general palette for scenes and settings," Elmes recalls. "We didn't tie specific looks or lighting to characters, but we did establish their homes in a way that would say something about the people who lived there. The Hoods' house is comfortable and warm, because there is still a certain amount of warmth in their relationship and the family. The house itself is in a setting filled with pine trees, which added softness, and there is greenery despite the fact that winter is coming. By contrast, the Carvers' Modernist home has very large windows and bare walls. In fact, the only real texture come from what you see outside the windows — bare trees with no leaves. Our designer, Mark Friedberg, was very helpful and collaborative in this process."

The design of *The Ice Storm* helped Elmes immeasurably in "using reflections in windows, mirrors, and any other glass surfaces to add to our photo-realist approach, foreshadow the ice storm and represent the characters. We built translucent surfaces into the sets and even the practical locations, putting in pieces of glass to build up reflections. That also suggested the impression of looking through things and past the surface at something else."

The cinematographer points out a key scene in which Ben Hood ambles drunkenly through the Carver home after Janey suddenly abandons him during an afternoon tryst. "It's one of my favorite moments in the film," the cinematographer attests. "As he waits for his mistress to return, Ben wanders through her house and looks out at the world through a giant picture window, which allows us to see him and the interior of the house, as well as a reflection of the forest and the impending storm. Behind him, we see through the house to the windows on the other side, creating a disorienting sense of depth. The end result is almost abstract."

Says Lee, "That's a favorite shot of mine, and it reaches for the limits of what we could do with reflections. I called that location 'The Glass House,' and there's an edge to the situation that I like — our hero is naked and transparent in this reflective space. Practically speaking, I think cinematographers hate that kind of setup, because there is nowhere to hide the lighting. You are not only lighting the scene, but also the objects to be reflected — while running out of space for the camera."

Elmes confirms that the setting did create problems "in terms of lighting and camera placement, but the result was *great*. It always pays off to fit a mirror or some reflecting surface into a shot, because it adds a tremendous feeling of openness. Also, having something happen off-camera, in a reflection perhaps, was more powerful than just seeing the actor."

Lee notes that the film's schedule was always arranged to create options. "In the beginning, we waited for sun," he notes. "By the end, though, we went inside to cover sets if it was sunny, and went out if it got cloudy!"

Schamus recalls, "We started production in April and shot for about 55 days, with all but about the last three weeks on location up in New Canaan and Westchester, New York." The first sequences filmed were day exteriors, specifically because they re-

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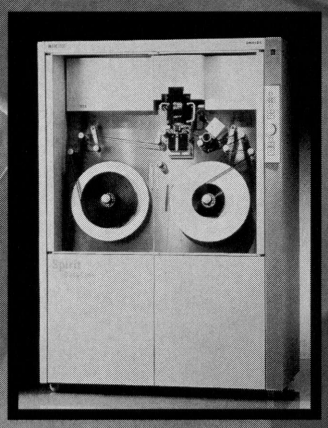

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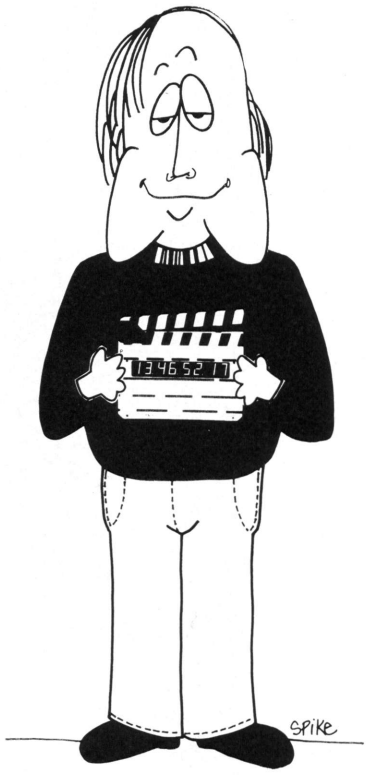

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quired that there not be any leaves on the trees; the story takes place over the Thanksgiving holiday, but spring was rapidly closing in on the filmmakers. Next on the schedule were any interiors that featured the landscape through windows. Then came the night exteriors, which included the ice storm.

While Elmes utilized HMIs to supplement the infrequent daylight, he primarily used tungsten fixtures. "I'm comfortable with tungsten light, and I know what gels will do to them in terms of color," he says. "In my tests, I generally start with what I know is a 3200°K light; that way, if I'm trying to create, say, a nighttime look, I know what color temperature I'm going to get when I use a particular gel. It's important to start with a standard in tests, so you know exactly where you're going. However, during production, among the lights you've rented there will be a percentage that have aged bulbs and discolored reflectors. Those things change the character of the light. Invariably, you might only have four 10Ks, and they won't all be perfect throughout the shoot, so you'll use the best one here and the others over there. My gaffer, Jonathan Lumley, was very attentive to this situation, and kept a close eye on all of my lights. The rest of my crew consisted of operator Phil Oetiker, grip Jim Finnerty, Jr., and first camera assistant Andy Harris. We had all previously worked together on a film called *Reckless*, and went on to do *In The Gloaming* right after we wrapped *The Ice Storm*."

Elmes eschews the notion of lighting by "formula," relying upon the scene at hand to suggest an artistic pathway. "There aren't any rules to this," he explains. "There was a time in my career when I felt the need to justify a light source in a scene, but now I'm much more liberal and place a light depending on the room, the scene and the architecture — to create an effect. You need to take those chances, because sometimes that's what will best illustrate the drama of a specific character."

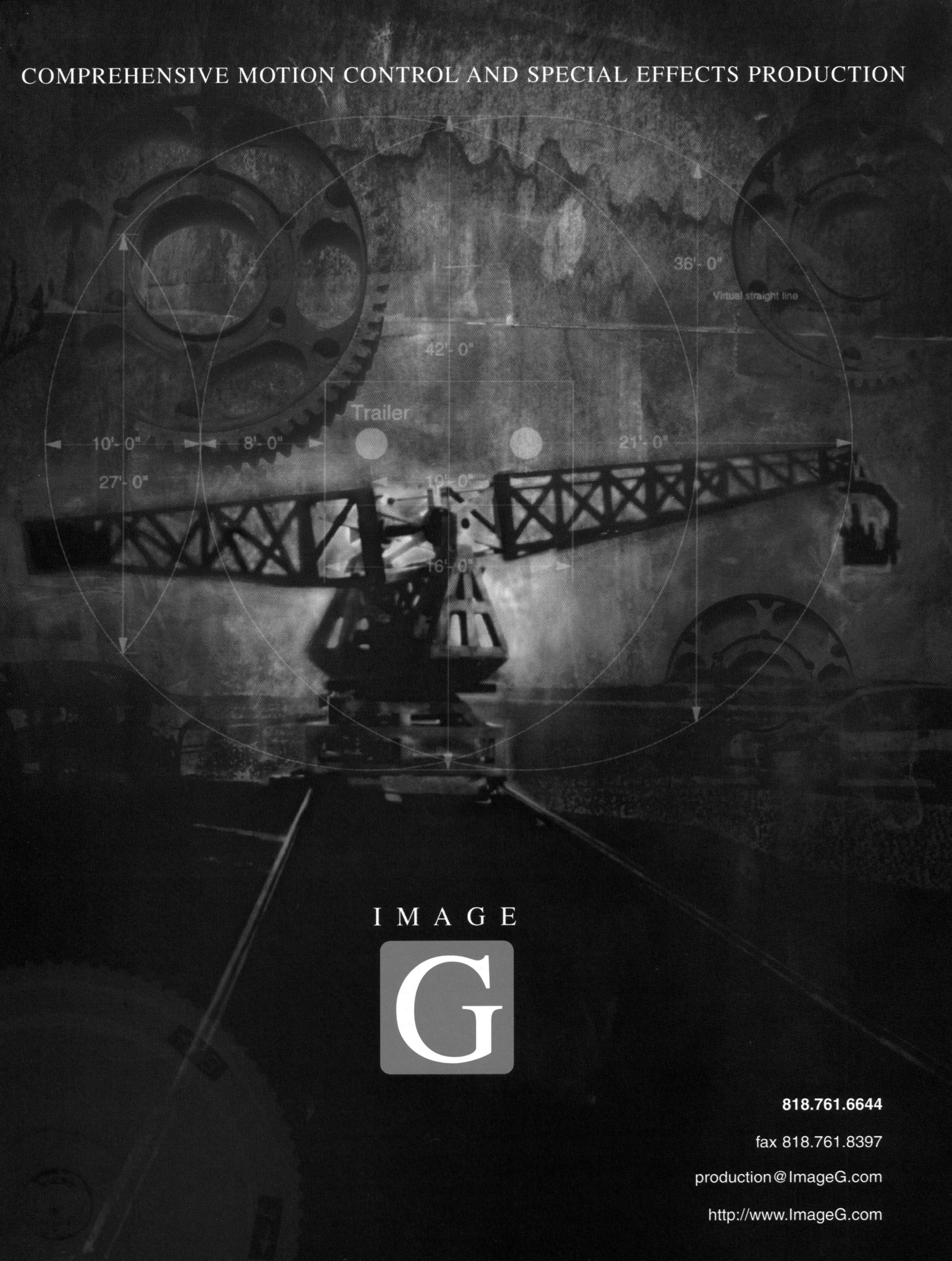
To illustrate his point, the cinematographer cites a scene in *The Ice Storm* in which Jim Carver returns home late one night after being out of town to find his wife Janey in the bedroom. "They have a conversation while sitting on their waterbed," Elmes describes, "The house is very, very dark, but clearly there is a very large light source outside their window lighting the bedroom. Well, I have no idea what that source is. I first thought, 'Moonlight is reaching into the room.' But it's a low, raking moonlight that is quite unbelievable. Somehow, though, it feels right for the dialogue that takes place. Going with the feeling was more important than being truthful, so we had a 10K coming through the window, making a very hard shaft of light."

The production's dailies were processed at DuArt in New York. "The staff there is very supportive," Elmes says. "The intermediate elements were processed at Technicolor, and Deluxe made the release prints in Los Angeles."

Dailies were screened on location. "It was important to me to see dailies on film," Elmes attests. "The picture was cut on an Avid, so Ang and the editor, Tim Squires, also felt that it was important to conform the workprint to the Avid cut and screen that as well. Then they would go back and make further editing changes. That approach made it even more important for me to get the dailies print as close to the intended look as possible. I didn't want them to have to imagine what the final look would be like."

Asked if Ang Lee is a technically oriented filmmaker, Elmes replies, "He's not when it comes to the camera, but he's very intuitive. When I show him a lens on the viewfinder, he has a very good sense of what it does to the space, how out of focus the background is, and what the scale of the shot is. That's not 'technical,' but it shows a lot of sensitivity. Ang always had an opinion about the composition and the size of the characters in the frame, but he left a lot of those decisions up to me."

Elmes generally subscribes to the belief that a dependence on video monitors as a reference tool can become problematic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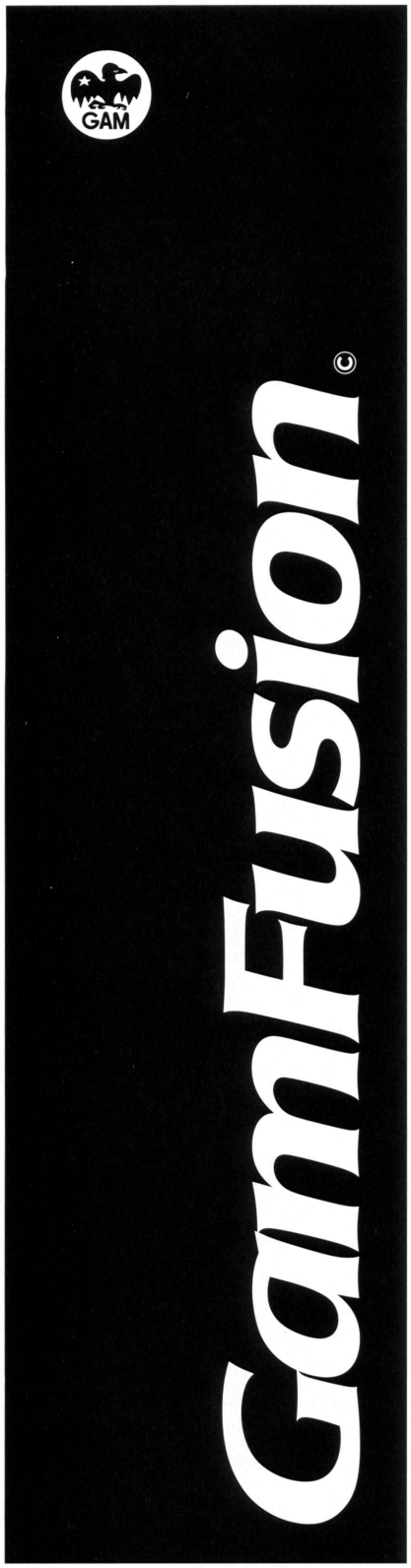

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in theatrical feature filmmaking. "We did use a video tap, but relying too much on the monitor can be a real trap," he opines. "What works best for me is to make sure that the director watches a full rehearsal through the viewfinder, just as the operator would on a real take. That's the only way for them to accurately judge a shot. Ang was used to doing that, and liked it, so I continued to insist upon it.

"In terms of framing, I tried to give the characters a sense of isolation, because that helped tell the story and convey a lack of communication between people. I sometimes put performers in odd parts of the frame. Many ideas grew out of the blocking of the scenes with the actors."

This "detached" aesthetic is exemplified by a scene in which a drunken Ben has passed out in a bathroom during a neighborhood swingers party. Elena soon appears for a confrontation. "We dollied down a hall with Elena to see her open the bathroom door," Elmes details. "She goes in, sits down and has a dialogue with Ben and then comes back out into the hall just past the camera, all in one shot. In the background we still see him on the floor, but instead of leaving the focus on him — which is the obvious choice — we stay with Elena's hand on the door in the foreground. In the greatest little bit of 'hand acting' that I have seen in many years, Joan Allen does this little hesitation before she leaves him there. My choice was to go back to Kevin Kline, but Ang wanted to hold on the door, and he was very convincing in his argument to do that."

Lee offers, "I think any good actor or actress can perform with just their hands. Usually we just shoot their faces, which is boring. We see faces too often, so a hand, shoulder, or body position can often be much more emotional. Plus, in this specific scene, Ben, our hero, is pathetically sitting by the toilet, and I didn't want to see that too clearly! I thought we used that kind of focus play quite well in this film, but it isn't a technique I would use in a movie version of a Jane Austen novel."

Elmes employed Arriflex 535 cameras and Zeiss standard lenses to capture the film's crisp images. "Ang and I had a discussion about lenses and how any diffusion could impact the sense of cold we were trying to create," the cinematographer recalls. "We decided against using any at all."

The decision to either move the camera closer to the performers or utilize longer lenses for close-ups also became a point of discussion. Elmes notes, "Most of the film's scenes were shot in the the actual living rooms, dining rooms and kitchen areas of the key houses, so wider lenses were needed to fit in some of the rooms. We seldom used long lenses for close-ups; our usual lengths were 40mm, 50mm or sometimes 75mm. We had done lens tests before production, specifically one that I always like to do for directors I haven't worked with before."

This test consisted filming identical close-ups of each actor with lenses ranging from 20mm to 150mm. "Those shots made it very clear as to how the combination of the focal length and camera distance will affect the geography of a performer's face and the relationship to the background," Elmes says. "We then selected the focal lengths that seemed the most pleasing. Ang had never tried this kind of test before, and we both learned from it."

Because of the color scheme that the filmmakers had in mind, and the outrageous fashion choices offered by a Seventies period film, Elmes and Lee also photographed many costume tests, examining different fabrics on the actors. "We also did some different things with makeup, and went out of our way to put characters next to each others in the tests to see what they might look like together," Elmes says. "Mark Friedberg brought in big painted samples of wall colors to use as backgrounds."

Creating and photographing the ice storm itself required another battery of tests. Fortunately, some preproduction planning paid off, adding a degree of chilly authenticity to the sequence. Recalls Schamus, "We did some second-unit work on the storm

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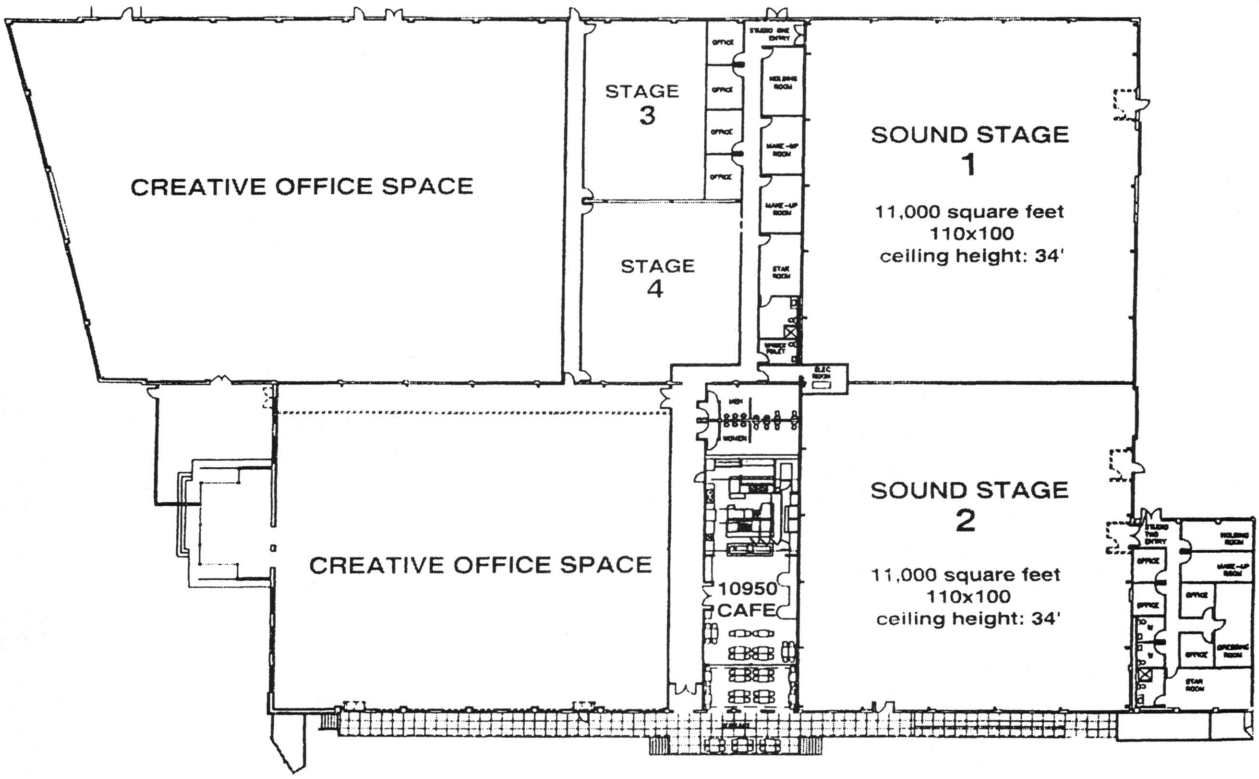

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long before the main shoot began. Hoping it would be below freezing, we drove up through Connecticut at night with a bunch of hoses and a water truck that we used to wet down streets and trees to get ice. On one of those nights, we actually encountered the only real ice storm to hit that area in 30 years. We got some terrific footage of the real thing. However, it soon turned into a snowstorm, and we couldn't use most of what we filmed. We digitally removed the snow from the ground in a few shots, and about five of those are in the finished film."

The second unit's success in getting real ice footage increased the pressure on Elmes to create a credible facsimile. His research began in earnest. "As part of our camera tests, we took tree branches, wet them down, threw them in the freezer, and then photographed them in big close-ups," the cameraman details. "We then shot samples of artificial ice and compared them. We found that transparent hair gel works very well when sprayed on roads and other surfaces. It also has a nice, friendly aroma."

While backlighting may seem to be the obvious approach to illuminating ice, Elmes' experimentation led him in other directions as well. "Ice is both transparent and translucent," he offers. "It acts as a lens in that it captures detail and light behind it, but it has a reflective surface as well. We looked at hard and soft light, because the ice appears in both the evening and day scenes. Also, there's a moment when the storm stops, the sky is clear, and we explore this crystal wonderland. Everything is glassy — you can slide on the ice covering the roads; we see this magical quality through the eyes of Mikey Carver.

"The sense of 'coolness' in those scenes was something Ang and I discussed quite a bit as we tried to define what the ice storm meant, and how we could capture that feeling on film. It wasn't just a matter of 'make it blue and therefore it will feel like ice.' I would find samples of colors in paintings to show to Ang an attempt to define a way of doing it without going over the top or becoming cliché. I don't like the idea that blue light equals night, so we tried to find a more subtle approach, especially since the second half of the film primarily takes place at night. Defining this coolness was also important in how it would contrast with the warmer settings we were cutting to. This is a character-driven film, and anything too strong would have overwhelmed that."

Lee elaborates, "Like Fred, I don't agree with the idea that blue equals 'night.' It's just an easy way out. We therefore tried to make our nights colorless, actually reducing any blues created or suggested by any lack of exposure. Part of this came through in the lighting, as we used reflections to suggest more light than is actually there."

Elmes explains, "We created the coolness with a combination of the lighting, the gels I used on the fixtures and the color timing, and DuArt and Technicolor were very supportive of that. Through the tests we did, we

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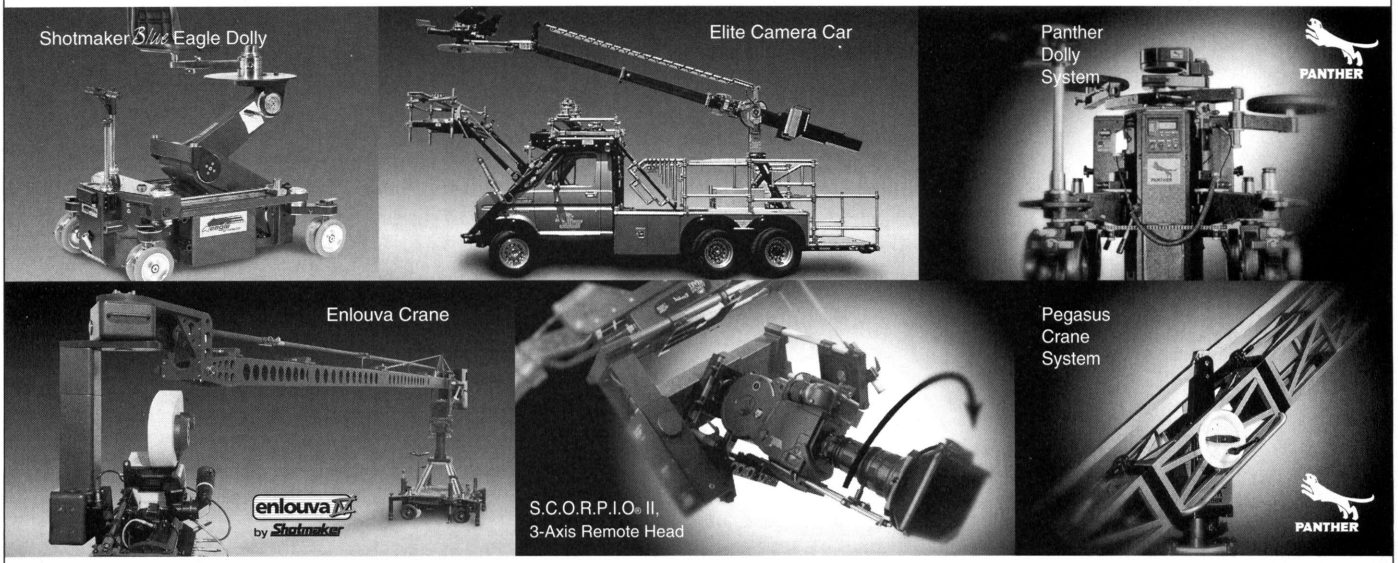

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found two sets of timing lights, one for day interior and day exterior, and the other for night shooting. This allowed me to change the color of the lighting on the set in order to make adjustments. We did our best to lock these timing lights in place early on, which sometimes meant reprinting something once or twice to find out how the lab was developing each stock, and ascertaining the proper ASA rating for the stock, lenses and my meters. From there, I could show Ang a print that was representative of what I wanted.

"Knowing that the timer has read the script, and that he or she knows what we're trying to do with the story, is a key part of this for me," he adds. "That way, if I can point out a specific scene, the timer will understand the parameters. The timer is a part of the visual team. For dailies, the people who watched over me at DuArt were Don Donigi and Steve Blakely. In Los Angeles, the timing at Technicolor was done by Gloria Kaiser, who did a fabulous job."

Elmes used Kodak's 200 ASA 5293 for the bulk of the film, on both night interiors and day interiors, "because it's a very sharp film and has a good contrast range. For the night exteriors, given our relatively modest budget, we needed the 500T Vision stock, which intercuts well with the 93. We occasionally used 5248 for exteriors because it has a bit more contrast and helped us to capture the photo-realistic look on sunny days.

"For me, the EI rating of a given stock is different on each film," he maintains. "Kodak says that 5293 is 200 ASA and an f2.8 equals 50 footcandles. That may or may not have been the case on *The Ice Storm*, while we were processing at DuArt and shooting with these cameras and lenses. The film speed changes with the look of each film, depending on what I'm photographing. I'll do tests, send it to the lab, ask them to make their best print, screen it, and then decide how to rate it."

Production on *The Ice Storm* wrapped after several weeks of stage work in New York. Pointing out that the characters sport winter costumes throughout the film, Schamus notes, "We built several interior sets at the Harlem Armory. By the time we got there in June, it was *really* hot."

Elmes has reservations about calling the Harlem Armory a "soundstage." The facility's lack of lighting gridwork proved especially troublesome. "We had to bring in a truss grid and fly all the pipes ourselves before we could even begin to light the film," he says. "Another problem was that the space had a tin roof. The noise was very bad whenever it rained. However, not having a real stage is not the end of the world, and a lot of films shot in Los Angeles are now done in warehouses."

Looking back on the project, the cinematographer says, "The Seventies as a period lends itself to a certain garishness, and were conscious not to make the film a Seventies showpiece. But I love doing period films, because they give me license to create a different reality and see things through different eyes." ◆

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Crew members track Nash Bridges *stars Don Johnson and Cheech Marin while filming a sequence on location in San Francisco.*

Photos courtesy of Stephen Lighthill and CBS.

Shooting on the Streets of San Francisco

Cinematographer Stephen Lighthill lends an adventurous edge to the Bay Area-based cops-and-robbers series *Nash Bridges*.

by Bob Fisher

The CBS series *Nash Bridges* is titled after its main character, played by Don Johnson as a charming, streetwise, S.F.P.D. cop who outwits the bad guys while dealing with two ex-wives, a teenage daughter and a childish father — not to mention his sidekick, Joe Dominguez (Cheech Marin). And the show owes its current look to director of photography Stephen Lighthill, who joined *Bridges* after Rodney Charters shot the first 13 episodes.

Discussing his experience on the subsequent 18 shows, Lighthill says, "Don [Johnson] is both the lead actor and executive producer. That isn't easy, but he knows what he's doing. He has good taste and judgment, never forgets a line or misses a mark, and is involved with every aspect of the show."

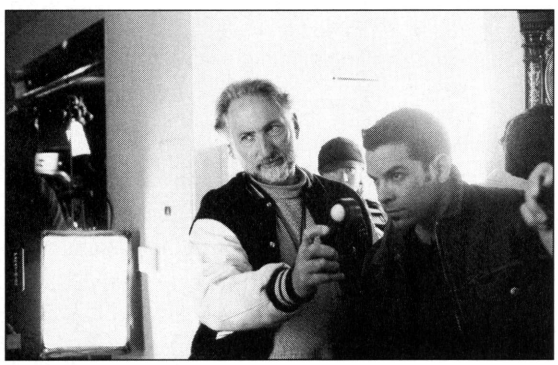
Lighthill says that an important part of his job is to create a collegial atmosphere in which everyone feels as if they're a valued part of the team, whether their job is technical or creative. There are times when a cinematographer needs his crew to walk through walls for him, but Lighthill believes you have to earn that respect. Diplomacy is another key skill. "I'm the keeper of the look on TV, but I'm also the director's helper, and there are times when those missions conflict," he says. "Sometimes a director insists on a shot that conflicts with the look of the show, or is technically wrong or too time-consuming. How do you tell them that?"

The *Nash Bridges* assignment was a homecoming of sorts for Lighthill, who launched his career in San Francisco while shooting TV news and documentaries. Along the way, he worked with Walter Cronkite, filmed stories for *60 Minutes* and went on the road with the late Charles Kuralt. Two of his long-form documentaries earned Oscar nominations: *Seeing Red* (1983) and *Berkeley in the Sixties* (1990). In 1994, his black-and-white documentary *Coming Out Under Fire* earned a Special Jury Award at the Sundance Film Festival and top honors at the Berlin Film Festival.

In addition to these achievements, Lighthill served as

an assistant cameraman on *THX 1138*, George Lucas' early foray into science-fiction, and as a second-unit crew member on *Bullitt* (shot on location in San Francisco by Bill Fraker, ASC). During the 1990s, Lighthill has shifted his focus mainly to fiction films for the cinema and television. His credits also include *Open Season*, *Shimmer* and the episodic sci-fi series *Earth 2*.

"I've always had parallel careers in narrative and non-fiction filmmaking," he says. "Documentaries give you a tremendous foundation. You learn the craft, because you are dealing with everything — lighting, putting up reflectors and adjusting lamps. You are watching people's behavior, listening to their stories, and learning about human nature. I learned the difference between wide-angle and long lenses while shooting close-ups for documentary interviews. There are a lot of ways you can make a scene work beyond lighting and shooting it."



True to his documentary roots, Lighthill has a taste for motivated light from a single source. "I'm a minimalist at heart," he says. "I'll use the lamps we need to tell the story, but I believe the light given to us is almost always better than what I create."

Lighthill had previously worked in San Francisco with Bradley B. Six, ASC as a camera operator on one season of the TV show *Midnight Caller*. He observes, "I love working in a place I know so well. I always thought you could use the environment as a wild, circus-like character. I've put The City on film many times, but never with the resources we have on *Nash Bridges*. We explore the back alleys, the odd angles, the back sides of the hill, the tenements that are hung on incredibly scenic vistas."

Lighthill adds, "The reality look we've crafted for *Nash Bridges* is about extremes. There are practical lights in day or night scenes that burn out parts of the frame. We also burn out a lot of backgrounds. It would have been considered bad technique a few years ago."

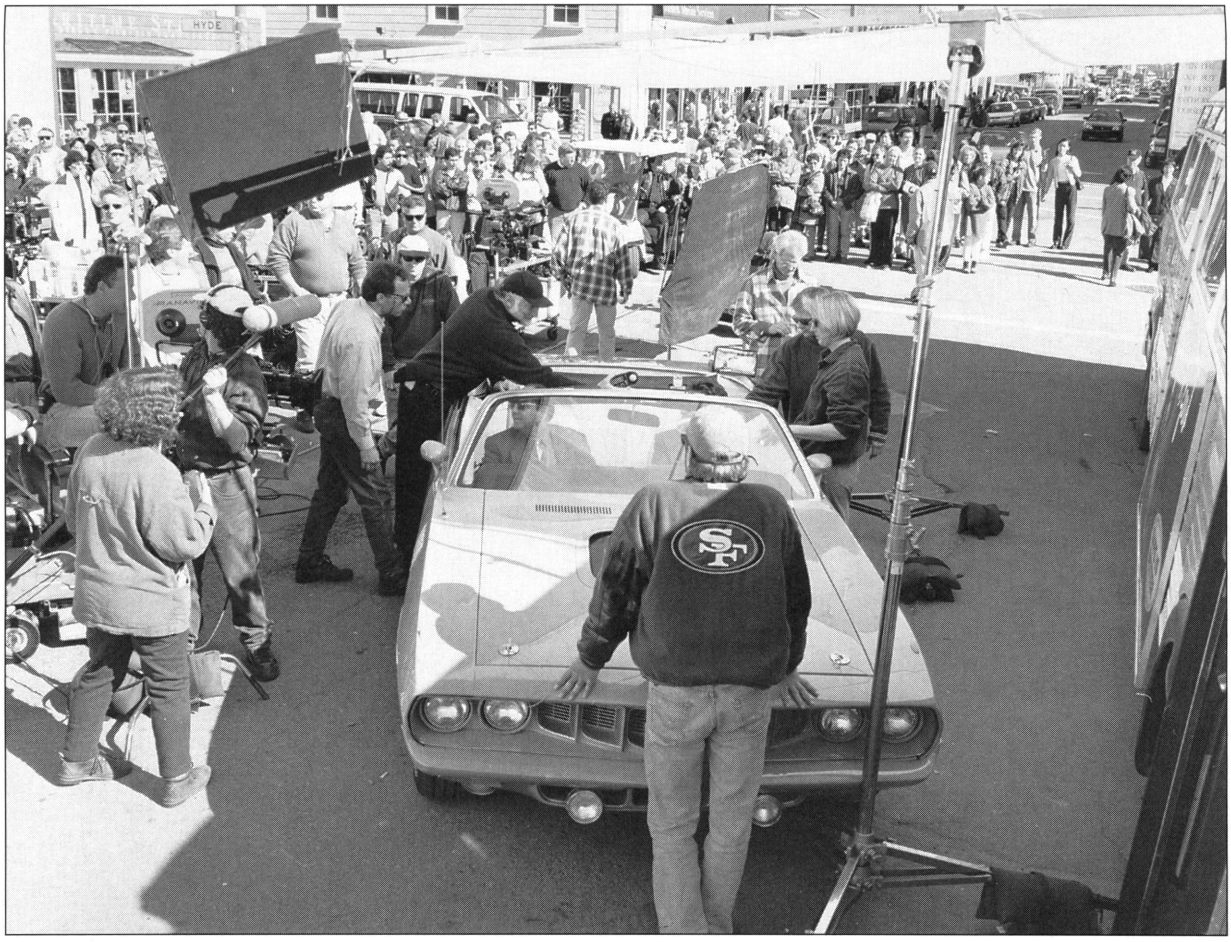
Bridges is generally scheduled to shoot five days on location and two in the studio, but Lighthill says the crew often finds itself spending six days on location. Their studio is a converted airplane hangar, which holds the main standing sets: separate apartments for Bridges and one of his ex-wives, Lisa (Annette O'Toole). The cop's apartment is supposed to be a penthouse overlooking Chinatown, but the convincingly scenic exterior is actually a huge TransLight which covers almost 180 degrees. There are separate day and night TransLights on tracks that roll easily into place.

The set is built on a second story so that the camera can take advantage of high angles. Lighthill fine-tuned things by putting a scrim between the set and TransLight to soften the image and create a bit of atmosphere between the actors and the background. "It's difficult to show the city as a background at real locations," he says. "The exterior background is almost always overexposed in daylight and underexposed at night. I have every light available pounding on the TransLights to make them a bit blown-out."

Lighthill credits Johnson with the idea of putting the show's police station on a ferry. The cameraman decided to put sheets of Mylar in frames outside the windows to create a sense of rippling water on the walls. "I love that set," he says. "It's a room that looks like an office, with a tunnel behind it that opens onto a view of Alcatraz. The walls are painted enamel white and are studded with rivets. There are metal surfaces everywhere, so I can bounce light off everything."

The set's interior is lit with a couple of 18Ks shining through the windows. Fill light is limited to practicals and a few small units. For Steadicam shots, Lighthill uses a Bug light — a very small, omnidirectional HMI — wrapped in a Chimera box. One episode featured a moving shot on the ferry

Left: ***Stephen Lighthill takes a light reading for an actor.***
Below: ***Two cameras are used to capture a dialogue scene.***



Lighthill (in black clothing and cap) wields his trusty meter, oblivious to the 'Don Factor' — the cinematographer's term for the crowds that gather to gawk at the show's famous star.

that took several actors from bow to stern through a brightly lit interior and into a tunnel with no windows. A 180-degree turn at the end of the shot revealed the city in the background. A crew member holding the Bug light walked backwards in front of the actors. The light added a glimmer to their eyes, and the fill was sufficient to keep the film properly exposed. "We went through a six-stop change on that shot, from T2.8 to T11," he says.

"The show has an overall architectural theme that is sort of deconstructionist," Lighthill notes. "One time, we shot in earthquake-damaged buildings that had been partially renovated. The exposed beams created a feeling for how everything was held together. The types of cars we have on the show also add to the look; Don drives a classy [yellow Plymouth Barracuda convertable], and a lot of the bad guys ride around in expensive cars from the 1970s."

Nash Bridges is a bigger-than-life character, and Lighthill treats him accordingly by placing him in "good, solid portrait light." He isn't reluctant to conceal Johnson in shadows and darkness, however. One episode ended with a classic shootout in which the star was silhouetted until the last moment, when the bad guy was shot. Only a brief glimpse of Bridges stepping out of the shadows was visible. "The show is edgy and risky," says Lighthill. "Like any actor, Don wants to look good, but he also wants me to take chances with my lighting."

There are a few things Lighthill doesn't do, such as using ultra-wide lenses on close-ups of Johnson, or heroic low-angle shots. "One thing I learned from documentaries is that sometimes you only get one take," he says. "That helps me cope with what we call the 'Don Factor.' When we shoot on the street during normal hours, we need an extra six production assistants to control crowds. If we're doing car shots in traffic, we have to be prepared to lose most of the soundtrack when people yell 'Hey Don!'"

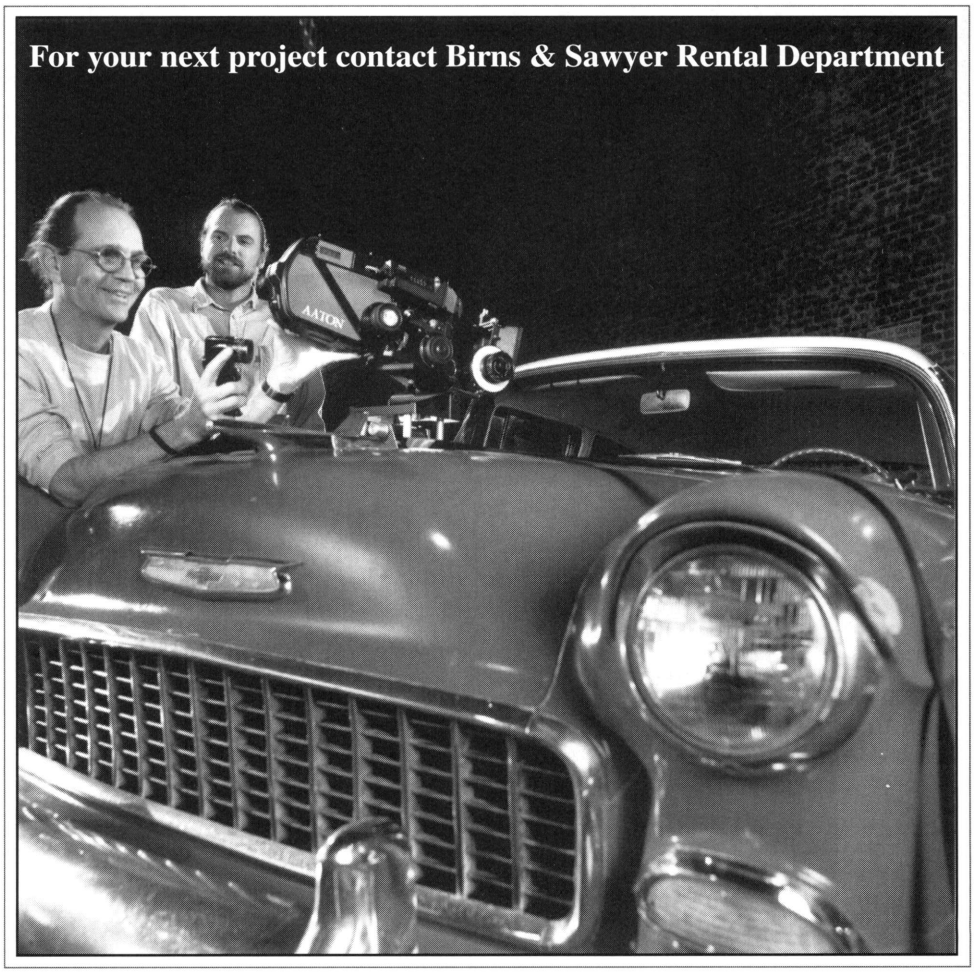
As with most episodic TV shows, there's a video tap on the camera, but it's mainly a director's tool. "We don't record takes on tape," says Lighthill. "Don doesn't come over and look at himself. He rode with the San Francisco police before starting the show and has a strong sense of how he wants to be seen. Don is very faithful to reality. For instance, if a director tells him to take cover behind something that isn't really cover, he'll intervene."

Lighthill had only two weeks of prep time before he shot his first *Bridges* episode. He reviewed the first 13 shows, visited all the locations and shot new film tests. "The first time I talked to Don, he made a comment about not wanting postcard views of the city," the cinematographer says. "I tested the camera films that were available at that time, and decided to use Eastman Kodak's Vision

Hi Tech - Low Budget

The independent feature film, "Rebel Heart" was a **35mm project with a 16mm budget**. When Writer-Director, Tim Powell and Gary Wagner (DP) came to us to explore approaches to cutting production costs, we suggested that they consider using some of the new ideas made possible by **Aaton timecode technology**. Using the Flicker-free Color tap on the Aaton 35-3, an Aaton GMT TC generator, and Betacam SP deck, they bravely set out to prove **you really can edit a show from VideoAssist dailies**.

The Betacam SP deck became the 4-Channel audio recorder, the video assist recorder, and the 29.97 Time Code reference. The **camera was set at 23.976fps** instead of 24fps creating the same offset as the audio, thereby **maintaining sync when the final print is done with picture at 24fps and audio at 30 nondrop**. Using the Betacam SP deck with VITC, the tapes were ready for **digitizing into their AVID**. Not having traditional dailies, they relied on condition reports from the lab that the negative was good. Telecine costs dropped dramatically, because there was no syncing in Telecine, and then, based on the rough cut, **only timecode specific takes were transferred.**



Film stock was saved because only quick ID slates were filmed. Wagner says, **"It was nice not having the 2nd AC jumping in and out of frame, and not having to re-focus and re-frame."** Director Powell says, **"The lack of slates definitely enhanced some of the performances in the more intense emotional scenes. The actors felt more spontaneous and concentrated."**

As for the camera, Gary Wagner has become quite an Aaton enthusiast. **"Car mounts and in-car work became a breeze with such a small camera. Handheld work is a dream compared to traditional 35mm cameras. The quick change magazines and light weight equipment allowed my small crew to work fast. This was especially helpful for all the quick location moves we did."**

More food for thought: Although not available when "Rebel Heart" was shot, the new Shot-Logger software for the Newton Message Pad 2000 takes timecode in, logs timecode specific scenes and takes, records comments, and downloads to most non-linear machines, automatically digitizing only selected takes.

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Armed with a bounce card, an intrepid crew member adds some fill.

5277 for all day exteriors."

Lighthill uses the 320-speed film from just before sunrise until just after sunset. "It's a little finer-grained than the Eastman EXR 5287 film," he observes. "You can pretty much see with your eyes what the negative will look like. It has 10, maybe 11 stops of latitude. That means if I'm shooting a bright exterior, the film allows me to record a normally exposed person against an overexposed background. The background is kind of bright, but the transition is so gentle you really don't notice. It looks natural."

The cinematographer routinely overexposes skylines by four to five stops, and it holds when the film is transferred to tape. "This film doesn't oversaturate colors, and you can overexpose it," he says. "I almost decided to standardize with one stock, but we shoot night interiors and exteriors about a quarter of the time, and I felt we needed the extra two-thirds of a stop you get from the Vision 500T film. [During my tests] I compared it to the 5277 film exposed at an EI of 500."

Lighthill notes that some people consider these premium 35mm films to be a bit costly for episodic TV production, but believes they record the look the producers want on a tight shooting schedule, and are so versatile that he was able to cut a hidden cost by reducing short-ends.

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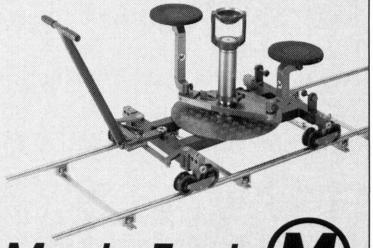

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Almost every scene in the series includes a master Steadicam shot. "Don hates having cameras mounted on the car being towed by the Shotmaker," Lighthill explains. "We developed a technique that we call 'free driving,' in which we mount the Steadicam on the back of the Shotmaker camera car. We can use long lenses, up to 150mm, with gyros on the bottom of the Steadicam and the Garfield rig, which provides the link to the Shotmaker. In one episode, there was a Steadicam pan off on the skyline, sweeping over to Don just as his car pulls up next to the Steadicam operator, Julian Chojnacki. Don hit his mark within inches, and Julian automatically corrected just a tiny bit."

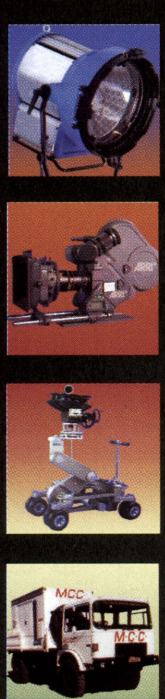
Lighthill uses big lighting units for almost all day exteriors "because the show has such a fluid camera. When Nash arrives at a daytime crime scene, we'll cover the car pulling up to the curb, and follow him into the building with a Steadicam, through the hallways to the scene of the crime. The only way you can really do that is by lighting through the windows. If you lit the location, you'd need a rigging crew to put a grid in the ceiling. All I need is a Condor with an 18K on it to create natural-looking daylight."

Depending on the director, episodes are shot with one or two cameras. The full-time B-camera operator, Stewart Barbee, occasionally does second-unit establishing shots. More frequently, the B-camera is used to extend coverage. "The most difficult thing we are asked to do is to light for two cameras," says Lighthill. "The easy way is to put the cameras side by side and shoot both wide and tight. But we often have the cameras pointing in different directions. We often do a Steadicam master with the second camera tight on the subject, and then we do a hand-off to another tight shot followed by a two-shot."

Lighthill's footage is processed at DeLuxe Labs in Los Angeles, and the telecine work is done by Richard Dalby, a colorist at Modern Film & Video in Burbank, which provides Beta SP dailies. "I use the Kodak telecine tool kit," Lighthill adds. "It has a gray card with black-and-white chips. You expose it in neutral light on the first frames at the beginning of each scene."

When working with this reference, Lighthill uses what he calls a "chart light" (which is color-corrected to precisely 3200° Kelvin) for tungsten film scenes. For daylight exteriors, he uses sunlight. "It gives the colorist an 18 percent gray reflectance reference," he says. "This isn't an exact science, but it gets them off on the right foot. I also tape-record verbal notes, which tell the colorist, 'This

The* Nash Bridges *crew prepares for a shot of the cops in their classic hot rod.



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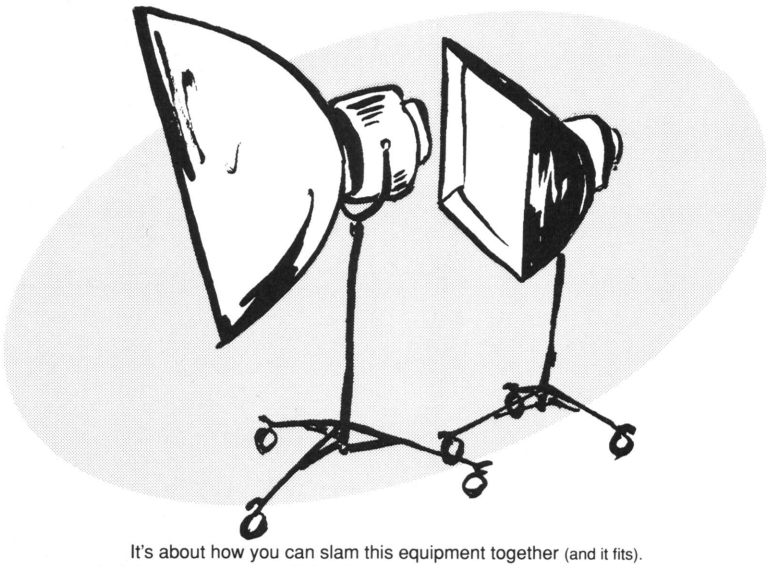

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is a day interior, and the background is intentionally a little blue,' or 'It's night, and I want the dark side of the face black and the bright side mid-scale.' Once you're in tune with the colorist, they have an understanding of where you want the film to go."

On the first episodes he shot, Lighthill's camera package included Panaflex Primo prime and zoom lenses ranging from 14 to 600mm. He eventually decided to simplify and standardize by using medium focal-length lenses in the 28-35mm range, and longer lenses (80, 100 and 125mm) for close-ups. "The longer lenses enabled us to back away from the actors, and let the background get slightly out of focus," he notes. "That draws the eye to the actors.

"I also use Mitchell diffusion filters on the lens to help the actors when we're shooting long, hard days and they're tired," he continues. "These filters were made in the 1930s, and are very gentle. To me, they're just another form of makeup to soften the edges."

Lighthill observes that *Nash Bridges* is one crime show that doesn't take itself too seriously. Occasionally, amusing things even happen in the middle of intense chase scenes. "Cheech [Marin] is a master of physical comedy," Lighthill observes. "The humor is in his expression and body language. Don is also very good at comedy. For comedy sequences, we tend to move back a bit into more of a proscenium arch."

Lighthill bends another basic rule while shooting *Nash Bridges*. "We do a lot of uplighting from ground level," he explains. "That used to be a major no-no, but now we do it all the time. We carry a small grid, but almost never use it. We don't have time to hang lights. My unyielding rule is 'No ladders on sets.'"

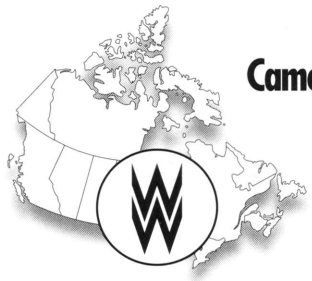
With all of the emphasis on realistic lighting, there are times when Lighthill pumps a lot of electricity through generators. In one night scene, the crew lit a mile of freeway to film a chase, placing their fixtures along an access road to the Oakland Bay Bridge and the rooftops of buildings. For another

episode, Lighthill used five 18Ks and five 20Ks to light both day and night scenes at a big courthouse.

While the show's cameras are almost always moving, there are exceptions. Lighthill believes that visually literate audiences know how to read images; when the camera stops, they will listen to dialogue and pay closer attention to facial expressions and body language. "There is an unwritten rule that the more you move the camera, the less people hear the dialogue," he says. "If too much is happening with camera and actor movement on a TV screen, the audience finds it hard to concentrate on the words. We've found ways to modulate that effect. If two characters are talking and walking, they might slow down and stop for really important dialogue. We also pass off coverage from the Steadicam to two static cameras, thereby drawing the audience into the conversation. If we we're shooting a night interior at a crime scene, I might isolate key characters in little pools of light surrounded by blackness."

Lighthill notes that San Francisco's upscale atmosphere is apparent in the show's visual scheme. There's a posh aura in the richness of the series' colors, clothing, props and architecture. "It's part of the illusion we are creating about a romantic, interesting world, in which Nash Bridges nabs criminals who have nice houses, lots of dough and great cars," he says. "There are plenty of gritty urban crime shows; this one is based in fantasy. You can be sure that the bad guys will never win."

Given the fact that Lighthill has dedicated much of his career to creating films that resonate with important social issues, does he find *Nash Bridges* frivolous? "Not at all," he answers. "There's usually a violent scene that motivates a chase, but I don't think the violence is gratuitous. There is also subtext. I like the way the characters communicate and try to work out their problems. Nash Bridges is honestly trying to resolve problems with his ex-wives, father and daughter. Television can be a positive role model in that way." ◆



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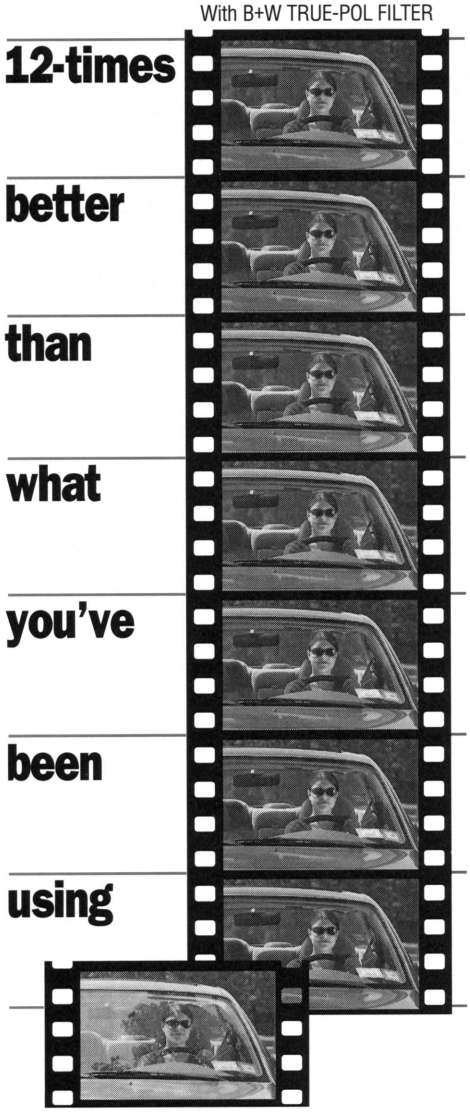

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Televised Triumphs

1997's Emmy-nominated cinematographers reflect upon their outstanding work for the small screen.

by Jean Oppenheimer, David E. Williams and Andrew O. Thompson

Photo by Victor Goodpasture, courtesy of Eastman Kodak Company.

In recognition of their individual accomplishments, Eastman Kodak gave each of the Emmy-nominated cinematographers and lighting directors a Kodak Vision award: (Front row, from left) Art Busch, Alan Walker and Peter Smokler, (back row, from left) James Bagdonas, ASC; Michael O'Shea, ASC; Roy Wagner, ASC; Bill Mills, Donald M. Morgan, ASC; Jonathan West, ASC; Donald A. Morgan and George Spiro Dibie, ASC.

REGULAR SERIES

James R. Bagdonas, ASC
Chicago Hope
"Time to Kill"

The Emmy-nominated *Chicago Hope* episode, "Time to Kill," also earned James R. Bagdonas, ASC an ASC Award nomination earlier this year (see *AC* May '97). The cameraman remarks, "We use a lot of camera movement on *Chicago Hope*. We often follow action from room to room and from one person to another, and we take dramatic license with the lighting. We put bright slashes across someone's chest without worrying whether there is a window in the room. In other places, we let things go dark where there wouldn't normally be dark places in a hospital. We also use really warm lights in the hallways, which are normally lit by fluorescents."

Bagdonas, who is in his second season with *Chicago Hope*, fell into cinematography by accident. While working as a rock band roadie in Chicago, he was introduced to Roy Wagner, ASC, who offered him a job as a camera assistant on a film. After the movie wrapped, Bagdonas moved to Los Angeles and landed a spot in the camera department at Warner Bros. He assisted such ASC greats as Haskell Wexler, Conrad Hall and John Alonzo before moving up to operator and collaborating with cinematographers Chuck Minsky and Ray Villalobos, who became his mentors. Bagdonas picked up a 1989 ASC Award nomination for *Hunter*, his first series as a director of photography. After two seasons, he moved on to *Lois and Clark*; three years later he signed on with *Chicago Hope*.

The CBS medical drama has a slightly different look this season, courtesy of a new film stock. Although Bagdonas was quite satisfied with the original version of Kodak's PrimeTime 640T that he had been using, Eastman asked him to try out the latest version of the 640T emulsion: 5620. "We agreed to test it," says the cameraman, "and it turned out to be head and shoulders above the old version. It's a T-grain stock, and it's sharper, more contrasty and just all around better-looking."

The new stock also spurred other changes. Whereas Bagdonas used a Tiffen Soft/FX filter on almost every shot last season, he was so pleased with the look of PrimeTime 5620 that he decided to forgo all filtration on this season's installments. He now employs much less fill on the actors' faces, lets windows blow out a bit more, and allows some of the sets' dark areas go a bit darker. "We don't worry about justifying any of our light sources," he says, "as long as we think they look right." — Jean Oppenheimer

Constantine Makris, ASC
Law & Order
"Mad Dog"

Four years ago, New York-based cinematographer Constantine Makris, ASC was pleasantly surprised to receive an Emmy for his work on *Law & Order*. "I'm a New York cameraman, so it was a shock even to get nominated," he says. When this year's nominees were announced, Makris again found his name on the list. "This time I was in disbelief, because I got nominated for the same show!"

Makris, a recent inductee into the American Society of Cinematographers, took over *Law & Order* during its first season when the show's original director of photography, Ernest Dickerson, ASC, left to shoot a picture for director Spike Lee. Makris has also directed several episodes of the show, which is now in its eighth season.

Makris came to television via features. After serving as an operator for nine years, he shot a low-budget film which caught the attention of producer Dick Wolf, who hired him to operate on the short-lived series *H.E.L.P.* (directed by Dickerson). From there, he moved over to *Law & Order*.

Nearly every episode of

the dramatic series conforms to a two-part structure: each opens with a crime and police investigation, followed by the legal aftermath. Roughly 75 percent of the initial half is shot handheld, in order to convey the cops' rough-and-tumble world. Most of this section is shot at real locations, frequently on city streets. Makris notes, "You're gathering information in the first half, so scenes are designed to have more flow and less editing."

The second portion of each show takes place predominantly in offices and courtrooms, with people sitting across from one another. The coverage is more conventional, with a greater reliance on editing. But whether the camera is on sticks or a dolly, Makris makes sure the frame never remains steady. "We want to keep the handheld look alive so that the [two sections of the show] don't look too different," he explains. "Using a Panahead, operator Richard Dobbs will literally keep turning the wheels very subtly so it won't look as if the frame is ever locked. It will always breathe."

Since the show is grounded in reality, Makris aims for a naturalistic look. "A lot of people say my lighting style is gritty, but I don't particularly ascribe to that description. I would say my style is source-driven. If there is no visible source in the frame, I create one out-of-picture."

Makris favors cross light and/or side light over backlight, since he feels that the latter approach tends to flatten objects. When he does resort to backlighting, he tries not to make it look too slick. "I try to separate actors by putting them up against windows," he says. "But because my night exteriors are rather dark, I sometimes have to backlight to get the separation. In that event, I tend to use one huge backlight — often generated by Maxi Brutes set up on a huge construction crane."

The courtroom set is rigged with 5Ks. For close-ups, other lights are placed on the floor and aimed through huge muslin frames. Makris also depends heavily on Kino Flo fixtures. "I find I can make the fluorescents do what I want them to — and not be flat — if I put them off to the side, [even though] it's difficult to get the light off the wall because they tend to spread all over the place. Another benefit is that they're fast to work with and cool, which keeps the actors comfortable."

— Jean Oppenheimer

Michael D. O'Shea, ASC
Relativity
"Karen and Her Sisters"

"Although the series *Relativity* began with a different cameraman," says director of photography Michael D. O'Shea, ASC, "I was grateful that Michael Watkins, ASC recommended me to the show's producers, Ed Zwick and Marshall Herskovitz. I had just worked with Michael on the Movie of the Week *To Love, Honor and Deceive* [see additional article in this section]. In reading the script for *Relativity*, I knew the show had a quality that would afford me some unique lighting opportunities."

O'Shea was also drawn to the series due to the involvement of line producer Peter Schindler, with whom he had previously worked while shooting the feature comedies *Dracula; Dead and Loving It* and *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* for director Mel Brooks. "Peter is an old friend, and I knew I could count on him to help me develop my concepts for this series," the cameraman says.

O'Shea broke into the industry in 1965 as a loader at Warner Bros. before becoming a first assistant and operator for Howard Schwartz, ASC. After operating for many other cameramen (including ASC members William Jurgensen, Edward R. Brown, Robert Stevens and James Crabe, as well as Nick McLean), he served as a second-unit cinematographer on such features as *Spaceballs, The Goonies, The Lost Boys, Geromino* and *The Specialist.*

O'Shea earned a previous Emmy nomination for his work on the lighthearted drama *Doogie Howser, M.D.*, which was his first series as a director of photography. He filmed *Howser* for three seasons. "I came on to operate for Frederick Moore, who left after a year and let me move up with the complete crew. When I got the job, I knew what I liked lighting-wise, but had to accomplish it in a roundabout way. While I had operated for a long time, my focus and vocabulary needed to expand to include all of the departments working around me. Fortunately, I had a wonderful gaffer, Tim Evans, and a great crew, who taught me. I'm still learning every day."

The cinematographer's other credits include the feature *Double Dragon*, the series *Raising Cain, Sweet Justice* and *Weird Science*, a pair of *Rockford Files* telefilms, and pilots for *Life 101* and *The Player.*

O'Shea credits *Relativity*'s succession of strong directors, including Ed Zwick and Michael Watkins, for some of his success

1997 EMMY Nominees

Series

James R. Bagdonas, ASC
Chicago Hope, "Time to Kill"

Constantine Makris, ASC *
Law & Order, "Mad Dog"

Michael D. O'Shea, ASC
Relativity, "Karen and Her Sisters"

Roy Wagner, ASC
Gun, "Ricochet"

Jonathan West, ASC
Star Trek–Deep Space Nine, "Apocalypse Rising"

Movies and Miniseries

James R. Bagdonas, ASC
Hidden in America

Frederick Elmes, ASC
In the Gloaming

Alar Kivilo, CSC
Gotti

Donald M. Morgan, ASC *
Miss Evers' Boys

Michael D. O'Shea, ASC
To Love, Honor and Deceive

* denotes winner

with the image-making. "As a cameraman, it's important to have directors who know what they want," he says. "You can just embellish that or make suggestions on what you think might work, but having that starting point is essential. Mark Piznarski, the co-executive producer on the show, directed 'Karen and Her Sisters,' the episode that was nominated. His background was in commercials, and his style was a bit different, so it was fun. He really liked to play things in one shot, with a lot of pan-offs and long-lens work. That was interesting for me, especially in watching how he blocked the scenes and worked with the talent.

"This was a show about real-life relationships," he adds. "It wasn't mushy, and it also had a stark quality. The sets were nice, which gave me a lot of options. We were also very fortunate to have some very pretty women in the cast. If you're shooting Kimberly Williams, for instance, you can bounce light off of dirt and she'll look good. She's very easy to light: she can take the light flat or around from the back. Of course, we still had to be careful and manipulate things until they looked right.

"The lighting on the show was primarily soft on the keys, but I liked to play the faces down and add a lot of hot streaks across the sets and the costumes. If we had a day scene with hot windows, I liked to blast light through — while still keeping it soft on the faces — and bounce it into mirrors and anywhere else it might go in the set. That gave the image a lot of separation, although you have to be careful with that look, because it can also start to look repetitious. But I like those hot spots even for intimate scenes, as long as they aren't distracting to the audience.

"I owe a lot to my crew on that show, because they were patient with me. The core group included gaffer Jack Schlosser, key grip Frank Montesanto, first assistant Steve McLean, second assistant Chris Thompson, loader Jason Garcia, and operator Clint Dougherty. They really worked hard for me."

O'Shea is currently serving as director of photography on the ABC dramatic series *Nothing Sacred*, which concerns the trials of a young Catholic priest running a parish in the Northeast. "We're shooting in Los Angeles, so the biggest problem is avoiding the palm trees and making it look cold," he attests. "Fred Murphy, ASC shot the pilot and did a wonderful job, so it's going to be a challenge to keep that going."

— David E. Williams

Roy H. Wagner, ASC
Gun
"Ricochet"

Veteran cameraman Roy Wagner, ASC's nomination for *Gun* gives him the opportunity to add a third Emmy to his list of achievements; he earned his two prior awards in 1988 and 1989 for the pilots of two rather successful fantasy series — *Beauty and the Beast* and *Quantum Leap*. He also won a 1991 ASC Award for the Michael Mann miniseries *Drug Wars II*.

Gun was an anthology series with only one consistent "character" — a pearl-handled .45 pistol. In each episode, the weapon gets passed on from one individual to the next, thus initiating a cycle of events which forever alters the lives of the particular episode's protagonists. "Ricochet" begins with a middle-aged Japanese man standing on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean; after he shoots himself in the head, the man's gun tumbles down the cliff, only to fall into the hands of a vagrant. The detective in charge of the investigation discovers that the suicide victim had left a million-dollar insurance policy for his greedy widow; she, however, happens to be having an affair with the her deceased hubby's business attorney.

Wagner began his professional career in the early Sixties as a photographer's assistant, and soon began shooting commercials for TV stations. When the Vietnam War escalated, he joined the Air Force, in which he served as a documentary cameraman; his work earned him several awards from the National Press Photographer's Association. After leaving the service, he embarked on numerous independent productions, including a documentary on cannibals that was shot on location in Australia and New Guinea. His first feature as a cinematographer was the indie film *Hype;* since then he has shot such features as *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors, Another Stakeout, Nick of Time, Drop Zone* and *The Pest*. He has also compiled extensive episodic television credits, including the series *Undercover, Nasty Boys, Christine Cromwell, Mann and Machine, Crime & Punishment, 2000 Malibu Road* and *Party of Five*. He is now shooting ABC's adaptation of the British detective drama *Cracker*.

Wagner became involved with *Gun* at the behest of executive producers Rob Dweck, James Sadwith and Robert Altman. The cinematographer has a rather succinct recollection of his initial discussion with the trio, which he says basically "centered upon finding a visual approach to *Gun* that would stop channel surfers." The cinematographer says that the director of the "Richochet" episode, Peter Horton, "was very much into discovering a look based upon the locations, character intent, and his interpretation with the actors. This allowed last-minute course changes as we refined the visual tools for interpreting the story."

Wagner shot "Ricochet" with a Panavision camera and Primo lenses, over eight days in and around downtown Santa Monica, Van Nuys and other L.A. locales. Wagner's penchant for exploring the full dynamic range of light-to-shadow on film lent many of the show's scenes a hot aura typical of the brightest Southern California sunlight. This achievement is all the more impressive given that the episode was shot during the winter months, when L.A.'s natural illumination can be overcast and the hours of workable daylight somewhat limited.

Some of this episode's most stylistic scenes occur in a Chinese restaurant, where the underhanded lawyer presents a scam to some Asian businessmen. The Chinese men are bathed in a hot toplight that almost seems to make them glow. Wagner comments, "The only interesting aspect of the

Roxanne diSanto

"My mother was a poet, so I was raised with a love for writing, literature, and imagery. Film became the most natural way for me to express myself - using color and light the way a writer shapes words and phrases. Cinematography is an art. It's the ability to externalize something that's buried within your soul. Sometimes the magic just happens. Other times you make it happen. It's always a collaborative and interpretive form of art.

There's nothing more satisfying than working with directors on projects that speak to something deep inside of me; deep inside the audience. We make people feel like they're being taken on a journey and they're slightly different at the end."

Roxanne diSanto's independent feature credits include *Kids of the Round Table, Young Goodman Brown* and *Frankenstein and Me*. She has also filmed many commercials for McDonald's, Levis, Michelob Dry, original programming for Showtime, plus numerous music videos. Roxanne was the 1996 recipient of the Kodak Vision Award for cinematography.

Roxanne diSanto

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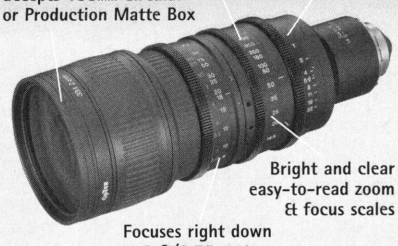

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location [an eatery in Van Nuys] was its ceiling. I felt like Nicholas Musuraca, ASC when he was asked about how he developed his style of film noir — there was no set. [For more insights on Musuraca's work, see Wrap Shot on page 112]. The best possible thing to do was to obscure the location by not lighting it. I mounted a 4K HMI Par straight down behind the businessmen, creating the illusion that their deeds were shady; they were principally shown in silhouette. The only light upon any face was that which was bounced back from others moving around them or whatever happened to be on their tables. I knew that the film stock could hold the highlights and the slight detail in the shadows if I placed the exposure in the proper zone."

Reflecting upon his work on the series, Wagner offers, "Each episode had its own challenges, failures and successes. I liked 'Ricochet' because of the opportunities that I had to discover new approaches to extremely difficult circumstances. We tested Eastman Kodak's Vision stocks to their limits, and I am proud of some of the results — particularly in terms of how the negative held highlights, solid blacks and middle values. The stocks were also extremely helpful because they reproduce color faithfully under extreme lighting conditions. We never used fill light anywhere; we allowed the key to produce its own fill."

— Andrew O. Thompson

Jonathan West, ASC
Star Trek — Deep Space Nine
"Apocalypse Rising"

Cinematographer Jonathan West, ASC likens the somber *Star Trek* spin-off *Deep Space Nine* to a "film noir set in space." The Emmy-nominated episode "Apocalypse Rising" (directed by James Conway) takes that concept to an even further extreme: it's set mainly within the world of the Klingons, the nefarious warrior race who regard honor to be the most sacred of all tenets. In this particular show, the Federation crew of the Deep Space Nine space station are surgically altered to appear as Klingons; the officers' mission is to infiltrate the Klingon empire's ranks.

West is no stranger to the milieu of "the final frontier," having boldly served as director of photography on the final two seasons of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (after previously serving as *TNG*'s special effects cinematographer). His predecessor on *TNG*, Marvin Rush, ASC, designed the lighting of the show's primary settings — the various interiors of the Federation Starship *Enterprise* — to have a rather crisp, clean look provided primarily by overhead fluorescent fixtures. West comments, "Going from that to *DS9*, which is generally a darker show, was a big change in lighting style. The station itself was supposedly designed by an alien race, so we tend to keep it moody. But it depends on where you are: the promenade [a recreation area with a bar, shops and restaurants] is a little bit brighter, and the corridors tend to be darker and more stark."

West's interest in cinematography stems from a four-year stint in the Air Force, where he served as a cinematographer, editor and narrator of documentaries. After his discharge, West did freelance work until he was accepted into the union as an assistant cameraman in 1974. He then spent seven years as an operator; West spent most of this time working with cinematographers Chuck Arnold, Gayne Rescher, ASC and James Crabe, ASC. In 1985, Touchstone Productions promoted him to full-time director of photography. His televisual credits include the pilots for *Hope, San Berdoo, Doogie Howser, M.D.* and *Heartbeat*. He also shot the specials *The Visit, The Big Bang, The Whereabouts of Jenny* (which earned him a 1991 Emmy nomination), *Finish Line, A Small Good Thing* and PBS' Great Performances' *Tale from the Hollywood Hills: The Golden Land*. In addition to *The Next Generation*, West also served as cameraman on the series *Private Eye, WIOU, Heartbeat, Our House* and *Eerie, Indiana*.

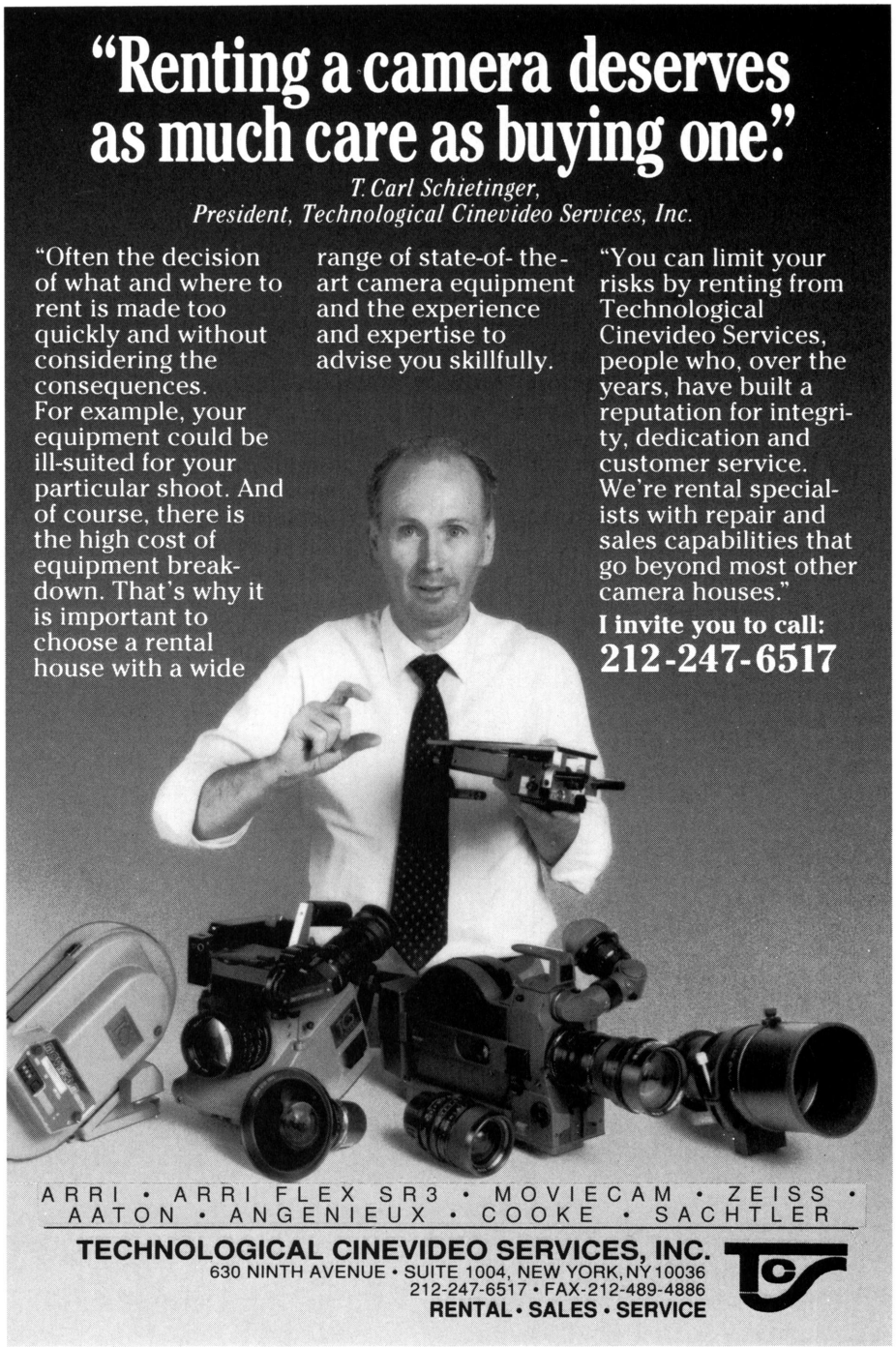
The cinematographer shoots *DS9* with a Panaflex GII and Kodak 5298 stock. He finds that the 98's 500 ASA rating is best-suited to the space station's level of ambi-

ent light, which generally hovers around a T3. Unlike the big-screen *Trek* adventures, the television show doesn't have to take effects work into consideration with regard to the film stock. As West explains, "The 98 affords me a very fast speed in case I have to go a little bit brighter for more depth of field. [In terms of effects work], we transfer everything to digital Beta and do all of our postproduction, including the visual effects, on either D1 or digiBeta. Once we get the footage out of the camera, nothing is done optically on film."

"Apocalypse Rising" was photographed primarily on Paramount's massive Stage 18, which was redressed as the Klingons' Hall of Warriors. The cameraman describes the set as "a large structure with 12-foot statues of ancient Klingon warriors, which was lit primarily by fire. We had a lot of fire effects with our own versions of flicker boxes. In contrast to that was a Klingon prison, which had a very cold, austere quality; we used overhead blue light in conjunction with the firelight at the end of the hall."

Since all the action taking place in the Hall of Warriors occurs at night, West could cheat on some of his lighting setups. He notes, "We didn't have room to put a backing behind some of the window treatments used on the side of the Klingon hall, so we just put bleached muslin along the sides. Behind the muslin, I placed [red-gelled fluorescent lamps and tweenie fixtures] on the floor. It was the only thing we could do [to give the set a sense of color], because we didn't have an exterior to work with."

The cameraman says that the biggest technical hurdle of the episode's seven-day shoot was maintaining a sense of cohesion between the various Klingon areas: the Hall of Warriors, a prison, and a battle cruiser bridge. West illuminated the bridge by aiming warm light through patterned ceiling grids and onto the shadowy, smoke-strewn set. Continuity concerns were further complicated by the action-heavy episode's kinetic camera work. Typically, West prefers to employ wide lenses on *DS9*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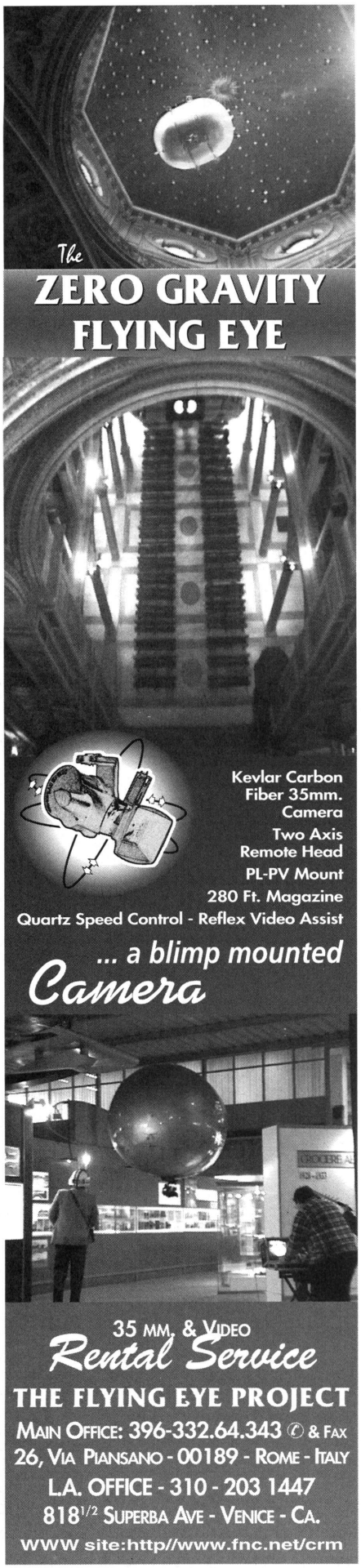

to make use of the station's alien architecture, but this episode's dramatics required him to combine quick-cutting tight shots with wide, sweeping masters. One such master required making 50 Klingon extras appear to be three times their actual number. West explains, "We created an intricate split-screen effect; we did one-third of the shot at a time with a locked-off camera, and then the visual effects people composited the shots. We also did some bluescreen work, and maintaining that continuity — shooting characters in front of a bluescreen with firelight effects and still keeping the integrity of the background plate consistent — was difficult."

— Andrew O. Thompson

Movies and Miniseries

James R. Bagdonas, ASC
Hidden in America

Showtime's *Hidden in America* reunited cameraman James Bagdonas, ASC with director Martin Bell; the two had previously worked together on the 1993 feature *American Heart,* which concerned a paroled convict trying to adapt to the outside world.

Like *American Heart, Hidden in America* focuses on the disadvantaged and the downtrodden. Beau Bridges plays an auto worker who loses his job; unable to support his family, he watches helplessly as his children begin to suffer from malnutrition. He soon begins to lose hope — along with his son, who attempts suicide. "Martin and I wanted to keep the same raw edge we had on *American Heart*," says Bagdonas. "We didn't want it to look polished, or like a documentary."

During preproduction discussions, the two men talked about using a lot of handheld and Steadicam techniques, but they changed their minds a week before shooting began. "We decided to stick with simple camera movements," Bagdonas submits. "We dollied very little and let the action just happen in front of the camera. We didn't want to distract from the performances."

Bagdonas elected to shoot the entire film on Kodak 5293, noting the stock's sharpness and fine grain. At one point in the story, Bridges' character can no longer pay his electric bill; the lights are cut off, motivating some unusually dark nighttime scenes. "Sometimes you get kind of freaked out in TV if you have a black screen, but we let it go," says Bagdonas. "The 93 is a medium-speed film, and it really kept the blacks rich and dark and maintained a nice, warm tone. As Beau walked through the apartment, we kept just edge light on him. We played some of it from a window, and some for no rhyme or reason except that we thought it looked good."

Bell and Bagdonas tried to shoot as much of the picture as possible in continuity. As production progressed, the film began to takes on its own character. Likewise, as Bridges' character evolved, the filmmakers found that they had to change some of their own ideas about how the picture should be shot. Bagdonas cites the film's climactic scene as an example. "The son tries to commit suicide. We'd always figured we would go cold and blue, but we wound up doing exactly the opposite — making it warm, using pleasing colors, and staging the scene at sunset. As you come into the room, you think everything is fine, and then [you see the boy]. The contrast worked brilliantly; what you see is really heartwrenching. And we [got the idea] from shooting in continuity."

—Jean Oppenheimer

Frederick Elmes, ASC
In the Gloaming

Frederick Elmes, ASC, became interested in photography during his boyhood in New Jersey, after his father lent him his Leica camera. Elmes went on to study photography and filmmaking in college, and was later awarded a fellowship to the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. There, he met directors David Lynch and John Cassavetes, for whom he would shoot a series of striking features (*The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* and *Opening Night* for Cassavetes; *Eraserhead, Blue Velvet* and *Wild at Heart* for Lynch). Since that time, Elmes has compiled an impressive

resumé that also includes *River's Edge*, *Night on Earth* and *The Ice Storm* (see p. 56).

Elmes was surprised and flattered to receive an Emmy nomination for HBO's *In The Gloaming* (see full coverage in *AC* May '97), the story of an AIDS-afflicted young man who returns to his wealthy parents' home to die. The telefilm marked the directorial debut of actor Christopher Reeve.

Gloaming is a Scottish term for twilight, and the film revolves — visually, emotionally and thematically — around that magical time of day. Six scenes in the one-hour movie take place at twilight, all of them consisting of two characters sitting quietly, talking and watching the sun set.

The entire film was shot on location at a home in Westchester, New York. The house, however, was a split-level structure, making it impossible to get Reeve's wheelchair upstairs for the bedroom scenes. Although the director could watch video monitors from downstairs, Elmes felt that he would benefit from some kind of video viewfinder. New York's Arriflex equipment house, Camera Service Center, built one. "They took a standard viewfinder, to which we could attach camera lenses, and rigged it with a color TV camera and a video screen," explains Elmes. "I could walk around the room and show Chris the shots that I saw."

A second camera — a kind of video spy unit — was set up in the corner of the room, so Reeve could look at one monitor and see the whole room, with everybody in it, and then look at the other monitor and see the video viewfinder. Director and cameraman would watch the rehearsal from their respective rooms, then communicate via an intercom system. According to Elmes, the system worked beautifully, and helped to facilitate an fruitful, creative and award-worthy collaboration.

— Jean Oppenheimer

Alar Kivilo, CSC
Gotti

Alar Kivilo, CSC learned of his Emmy nomination while va-

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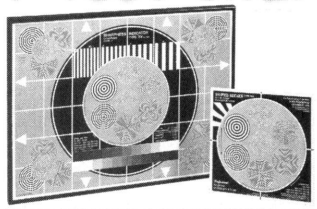

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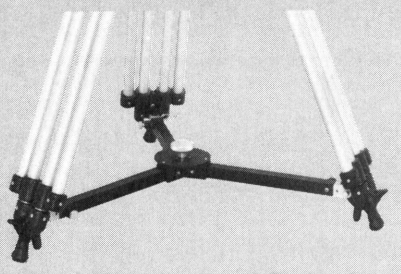

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cationing in Estonia, where he and his family spend every summer visiting his parents and in-laws. This is his second recognition for *Gotti*, which earned an ASC nomination last spring (see *AC* May '97). Kivilo was also nominated for an ASC Award in 1995 for the miniseries *The Invaders* (see *AC* May '96).

Gotti chronicles the rise and fall of Mafia don John Gotti, whose love of the public stage helped precipitate his downfall. "Gotti couldn't help himself; he just had to be in the limelight. He was the only mob boss to ever appear on the cover of *Time* magazine," says Kivilo. "It's not a good idea for a mob boss to be in the limelight."

The cinematographer continues, "The most challenging thing for me on any film is trying to find visual images that support the subtext of the story. On this show, director Robert Harmon and I came up with the idea of a moth being drawn to a flame." Whenever star Armand Assante appeared on screen, Kivilo would try to subliminally suggest that concept by including a light source in the frame with him. As Gotti became more and more famous, scenes became even brighter as a result of exploding flashbulbs and strong backlight generated by ever-present news cameras. "We always tried to have some kind of light source [motivating] the illumination," notes Kivilo. "Everything was drawn from the reality of the situation, which is how I like to work."

Whenever possible, Kivilo uses just one film stock on a picture. On *Gotti*, he selected Kodak's 5298. Addressing this methodology, he says, "It's really just to simplify the process so that I can put more thought into the conceptual aspects of filmmaking, rather than getting bogged down in technical matters." For similar reasons, he likes shooting at around T2.8 or 3.5; more open settings cause him to spend too much energy in trying to decide whether everything is in focus. "A 2.8 gives the focus puller a fighting chance," he maintains.

The cameraman's favorite images from the HBO movie are two virtually identical shots — one early in the picture, the other at the end — which together sum up the theme of the story. Early on, Gotti does a brief stint in prison. "He's a really natty dresser, and is concerned with his personal appearance," says Kivilo. "In the shot in question, he's getting ready to go to prison. He's standing at a mirror combing his hair, and we shot it through the crook of his arm. You see his face framed within his arm, and he looks almost glamorous, like a model in a men's magazine."

The very last image of the film is a repeat of that same shot, but this time the Mafia leader is looking into a prison mirror made of tin. "He is looking at himself and combing his hair, but his face is distorted by the tin and he has the look of a sad clown. Within those two shots, you see the whole progression of the movie."

—Jean Oppenheimer

Donald M. Morgan, ASC
Miss Evers' Boys

Donald M. Morgan, ASC is no stranger to award podiums. In addition to winning two Emmys (for 1990's *Murder in Mississippi* and 1993's *Geronimo*), he has earned three other Emmy nominations (1979's *Elvis*, 1992's *Doublecrossed* and 1996's *Ruby Ridge: An American Tragedy*), a record of four ASC Awards (*Ruby Ridge*, *Geronimo*, *Murder in Mississippi* and 1991's *Dillinger*) and two ACE Awards (for *Doublecrossed* and *Geronimo*).

In addition, Morgan has compiled extensive feature credits, including *Starman*, *Christine*, *Used Cars* and *A Piece of the Action*. In fact, Morgan was being considered for a feature when he was approached about doing HBO's *Miss Evers' Boys*. "When I read the script I just had to do it," he says, the passion still evident in his voice. "It was such a neat story, and I was very excited to be teamed up again with director Joe Sargent [the two had previously worked together on *Freedom* and *Amber Waves*]. There are stories you can do on TV that no one will touch as a feature, because it isn't 'profitable' — meaningful stories that say something

about the human condition. Companies like HBO and TNT put their money where their mouths are."

Miss Evers' Boys recounts the horrifying, true story of the so-called Tuskegee Experiment, in which the U.S. Government Public Health Service withheld treatment from a group of African-American men suffering from syphilis. The experiment began in 1932 and continued until 1972, when a press report brought it to public attention. The resulting outcry forced a halt to the study and prompted Senate hearings on the matter.

"Joe is a very visual director, and he wanted the film to have a sort of blown-out look, like the old black-and-white photographs he had of the time period," explains Morgan. "Not being able to go black-and-white for television, I talked to Don Henderson over at Kodak, and he suggested that I use Vision 320T as my main stock. I liked it because I found that it wasn't as contrasty as other films, and it really bites into the dark areas. With older stocks, when you light from only one side you have a half-lit face — the other half is totally dark. Vision 320T allowed me to light that way but still see detail, such as the eye on the other side of the face."

The filmmakers wanted to evoke the feeling of the impoverished areas of the South, so Morgan utilized a Super Frost 2 filter and a tobacco filter, which gave a warm tint and produced the exact look the filmmakers envisioned. Few people had electricity in those poor areas; instead, they relied upon candles and oil lamps. Morgan used a lot of dimmers and flicker generators to simulate the light, as well as the glow from fireplaces. "Even in the hospital rooms, when doctors were examining patients, we tried to just have little pools of light so it didn't look real up-to-date," he says. "I think you can bend the look when you underlight things."

Morgan notes that he saw the feature *Last Man Standing* right before starting *Miss Evers' Boys*, and was impressed with fellow ASC member Lloyd Ahern II's penchant for shooting through old glass. "He did a great job, shooting a lot of stuff

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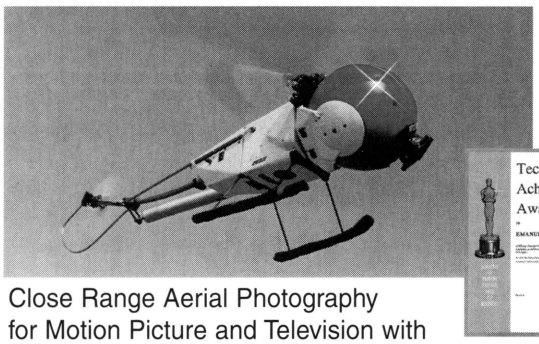

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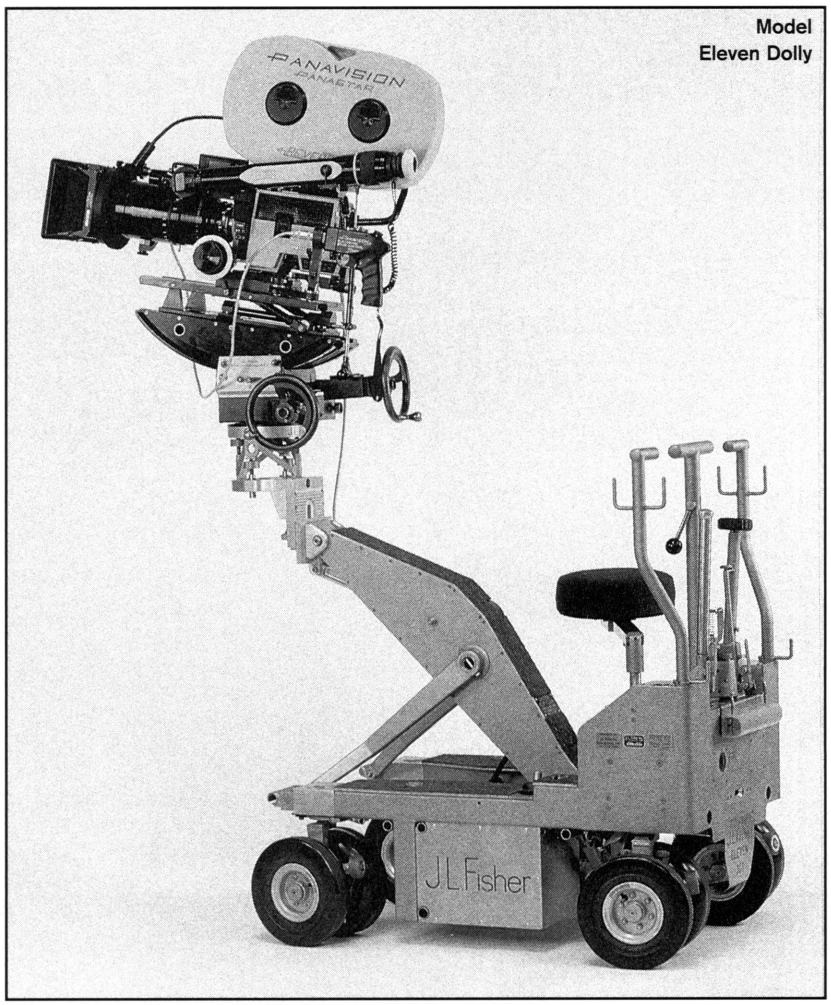

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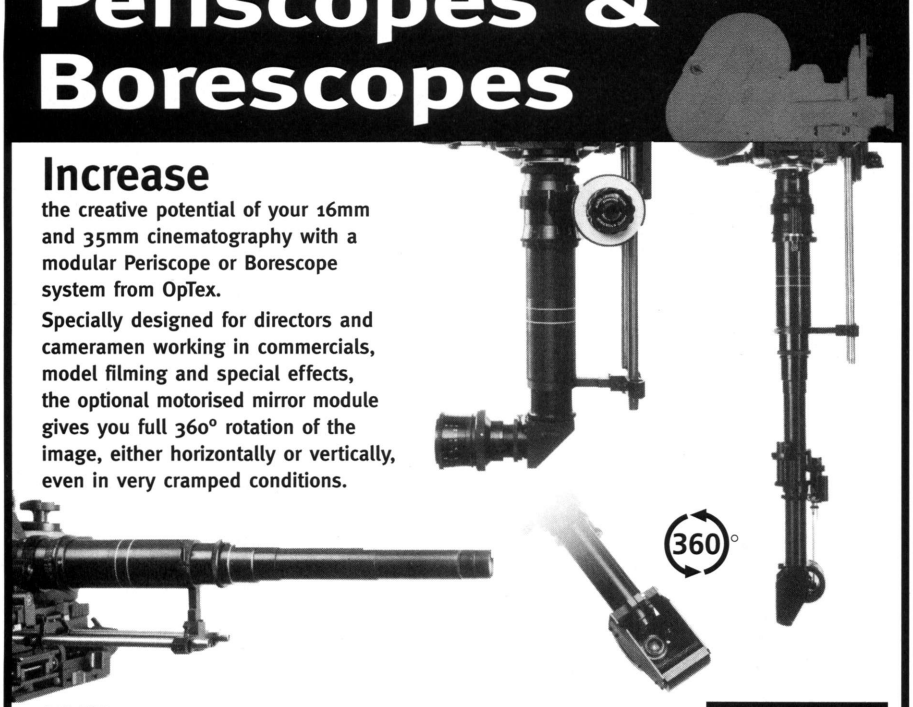

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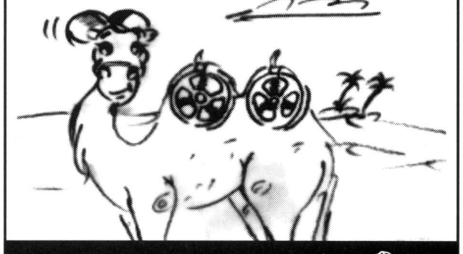

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in cars and through windows. Giving credit where credit is due, I [followed his example] and did a lot of that as well."

—Jean Oppenheimer

Michael D. O'Shea, ASC
To Love, Honor and Deceive

"I was interested in this project from the beginning, because the director was Michael Watkins [ASC]," cinematographer Michael D. O'Shea, ASC says of *To Love, Honor and Deceive*, the first Movie of the Week he's had the opportunity to photograph. "He called me up, sent me a script and backed me up all the way through my interviews with the producers [Robert Greenwald Prods.]. Michael is a wonderful cameraman himself, and if you have any ounce of energy or talent, he's got an amazing way of pulling it out of you."

Shot in North Carolina, *To Love, Honor and Deceive* concerns a woman whose husband and son are supposedly lost at sea while boating. She later discovers that he had been an informant for the FBI and led a double life. "This was an intrigue picture, and Watkins had it laid out shot-for-shot to show how the story unfolded in his mind," O'Shea recalls. "He then told me what he wanted and got me really involved in the story."

Part of this process was involving the cameraman in the rehearsals and the production design. O'Shea comments, "There was terrific communications between us, which was especially helpful since I was using a North Carolina crew, which included key grip Bruno Pele and first assistant Erin Cooke. The exception was my gaffer, Jack Schlosser, who also understood what Michael wanted and was a great help."

To Love, Honor and Deceive was shot entirely on Kodak's 5293 and 98 stocks. "I love 93 for its color saturation. I and try to use it whenever I can, provided we have the light," O'Shea notes. "But for nights and big interiors, I use 98."

While working within the confines on an 18-day schedule to film 175 scenes entirely on location, O'Shea found the most difficult

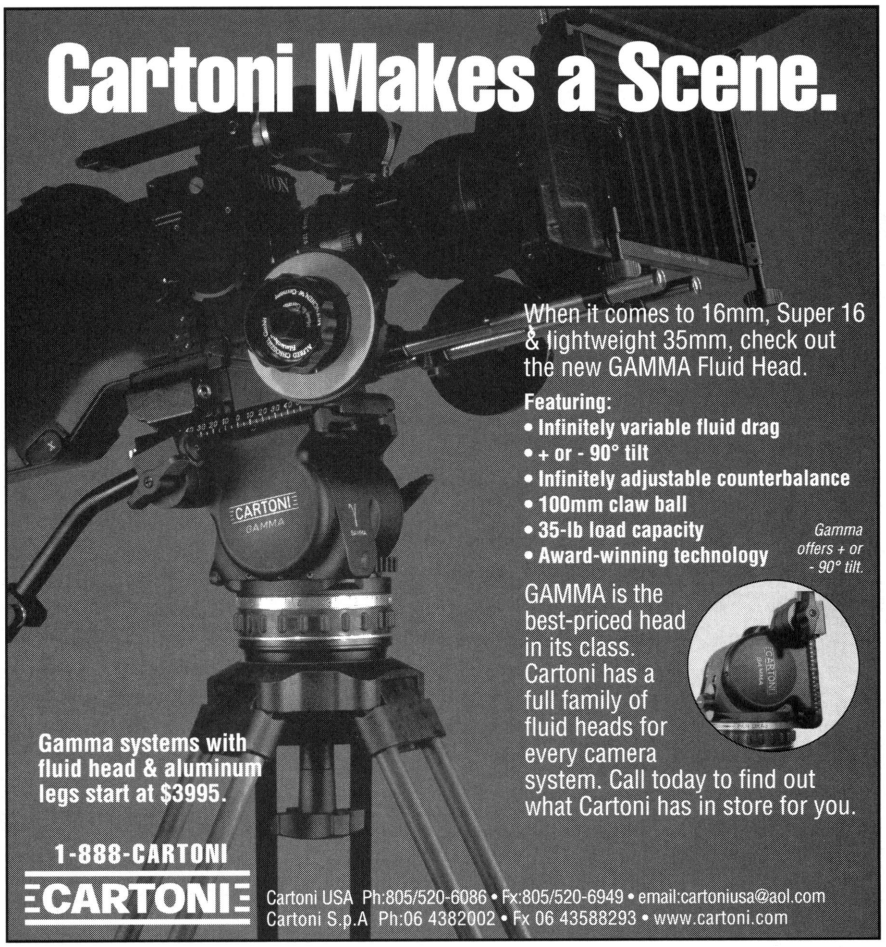
sequence to be a search-and-rescue operation set at night, which was filmed over just one evening. "After being told that her husband and son are missing, the heroine goes to the pier to see the remnants of their boat," the cameraman relates. "It was a big rain sequence with wind and lighting, and helicopters hovering over the pier."

Since the show's budget didn't allow for the use of real helicopters, the aircrafts' presence was suggested through the use of Xenon lamps on Condors, while multiple Ritter fans whipped up the tempest. O'Shea took advantage of his Panavision cameras' variable frame-rate function to shoot the sequence. "Michael had a specific way he wanted this scene shot, and that was to use three cameras, one filming at 6fps, one at 24 frames, and the last at 60 frames — which he would intercut to create the feeling of the character in scene. When you transfer the 6fps footage in telecine at 6fps, you get that blurring effect, which is an interesting style.

"Michael also wanted a lot of white light in the scene, so we made those Xenons as hot as we could," O'Shea adds. "He felt that the overexposure really added to the emotion of the story and the scene. That was the hardest sequence on the shoot, but it was also my favorite. Michael insisted from the beginning that things should not look overlit, but this scene was actually quite expressionistic. Overall, he was looking for a naturalistic approach without a lot of colors, but this particular scene was very cold blue — almost black-and-white at times — because of the strong lighting."

Reflecting upon the project, O'Shea offers, "After we were done shooting this picture, I was beat, but I felt as if we had really done something. I try to give every show as much of a feature film quality as I can, but that's sometimes hard to do in the time you have. Fortunately, many of the producing teams working in television today come from a feature background, and they appreciate that type of approach and the effort to make things look better."

— David E. Williams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Dark Deeds Abound in *Tower of London*

Sumptuous spectacle was the order of the day in Universal's 1939 retelling of the Richard III legend.

by George Turner

"No age is without its ruthless men who, in their search for power, leave dark stains upon the pages of history," we are told in the prologue to Universal's memorable 1939 movie *Tower of London*. "During the Middle Ages, to seize the Tower of London was to seize the throne of England... Within the deep shadows of the Tower walls lives the population of a small city — some in prison cells and torture chambers, some in palaces and spacious lodgings, but none in peace. A web of intrigue veils the lives of all who know only too well that today's friends might be tomorrow's enemies..."

The most ruthless man of all, according to the film and many historians, was Richard, Duke of Gloucester, destined to become King Richard III. In *Tower*, the infamous plotter is superbly portrayed by Basil Rathbone, then at the peak of his career. He is abetted by Boris Karloff, the reigning king of horror films, as the equally twisted Mord. A more fiendish teaming can hardly be imagined.

Much of Richard's infamy is founded upon William Shakespeare's plays *King Henry VI* and *The Life and Death of King Richard III*, in which the scheming, hunchbacked politician murders his way to the throne. His victims include the elderly King Henry VI, the Duke of Clarence (his own brother), and a pair of boy princes. Shakespeare depicted Richard as a cruelly deformed monomaniac, self-described as having an arm "like a wither'd shrub... an envious mountain on my back... legs of an unequal size... disproportion... in every part, like to a chaos, or an unlick'd bear-whelp..."

Many revisionist historians insist, however, that Richard was a just ruler who became a victim of slander after he was slain by the army of his successor, Henry Tudor. Even after workmen repairing a stairway found the skeletons of the missing princes, it was suggested that they were killed by the Tudors. As for alleged deformities, Richard's official portrait reveals a pleasant-looking man, although his right shoulder does appear to be higher than his left. But then, was there ever a royal artist with the chutzpah to paint an unflattering portrait of his king?

Tower of London was shepherded by producer-director Rowland V. Lee and his screenwriter brother, Robert N. After penning 1922's *Shirley of the Circus* for Fox Film, the pair had worked together on several other productions. Their collaborations were contentious. "We write it out and fight it out," Robert Lee explained. "That's the advantage of being brothers. We can say things to each other that nobody else would take." They liked on-set improvisation, and Robert stood by during production to make changes.

In 1936, following Rowland's successful historical dramas, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Cardinal Richelieu*, the brothers decided to write an English history yarn. Robert immersed himself in reference books, while Rowland went to England to do some research at the British Museum. "We agreed that we wanted to use the roughest, [most] hard-boiled period of all time," Robert said in a press release. "Row was

for the Stuart era. It was tough, all right, but I held out for the time of Richard. Those guys made our moderns look like sissies... We found by examining the old armor that they were little guys, but they were game... They didn't squeal the way our big-time gangsters do when they had to pay up. The only record of a gallows welcher in history is that of Margaret of Salisbury. She tried to run and they cut her down. But Marge was 71 years old... When I proved all of this, Row agreed with me."

Rowland Lee directed what has been called the most beautiful of all talking pictures, *Zoo in Budapest* (1933), photographed by Lee Garmes, ASC. He also had a penchant for the macabre, as demonstrated in his two popular *Fu Manchu* chillers of 1929-30. While in England, he directed Ann Harding and Basil Rathbone in the hair-raising *Love From a Stranger* (1937), and was impressed with Rathbone's projection of suave villainy. At Universal the following year, he directed Rathbone, Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi and Lionel Atwill in the expensive — but worthy — *Son of Frankenstein*, sparking the rebirth of the neglected horror genre. He and Rathbone then collaborated on *The Sun Never Sets* (1939), a stiff-upper-lip tribute to the British Empire which Lee jazzed up by casting Lionel Atwill as a mad scientist — to the outrage of critics and the delight of shirtsleeve audiences.

In the wake of these projects, Universal gave the Lees the go-ahead for *Tower of London*, granting the duo one of the largest budgets they had offered in years: $500,000, with a 36-day shooting schedule. A great amount was allotted for the construction of a replica of the real tower, and another large chunk went for costumes for 75 feature players and some 300 extras. The cast was an expensive one; Rathbone and Karloff, for example, were in the $5,000-per-week class. Obviously, such a picture could not be finished in six weeks.

The real tower stands on the north bank of the Thames in London's East End, and is maintained as a tourist attraction. It is a collection of thick-walled stone buildings covering 13 acres and centering around the huge White Tower, built by William the Conqueror as a palace and prison. A high stone wall and moat surround the spread. Many famed historical personages were imprisoned and beheaded within the walls or on an adjacent hill. The crown jewels are housed on the premises, and the Beefeaters (or Yeomen Warders) still stand guard in their traditional garb.

Until quite recently, Universal's tower also stood intact; the structure appeared in dozens of movies for more than five decades, and was a vital feature of the studio's tour. During preparation for *Tower of London*, supervising art director Jack Otterson, an architect who had designed part of the Empire State Building, was assigned to create a reasonable facsimile of the historic edifice, which would then be constructed on the backlot. He and unit art director Richard Riedel made 75 charcoal drawings and watercolor paintings — mainly accurate reproductions — of the exteriors, including the portcullis and the 90-foot keep tower, and interiors such as the royal chambers, torture chamber, prison cells, chapel, council rooms and bedrooms. Riedel saw the project through to completion. Exteriors were scaled down somewhat (the keep, for example, was reduced to 75'), and certain elevations were left uncompleted (to be finished with matte paintings by Jack Cosgrove, ASC and Russell Lawson, ASC). The sets were massive, imaginative and planned for staging in depth.

It became evident that there was little opportunity to economize on the project. Some necessary props were already in inventory, such as torture instruments, hand-carved cabinets, and oversize furnishings from the 1923 *Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Mord's iron maiden had previously been used to dispatch Conrad Veidt in 1927's *The Man Who Laughs*.

Principal photography began on August 11 with virtually the same crew that had collaborated on *Son of Frankenstein*, including the Otterson-Riedel team and cinematographer George Robinson, ASC. Robinson's gift for creating strong radial compositions and dramatic shadow-play was again a critical factor. Lee and Robinson deliberately avoided the sweeping crane shots deemed necessary for most spectacular productions, opting instead for a minimum of camera movement.

RKO had wanted Rathbone to play the prin-

Opposite page: ***Plotters in their finery. George, Duke of Clarence (Vincent Price), King Edward IV (Ian Hunter) and Richard, Duke of Gloucester (Basil Rathbone) hatch a scheme.*** **Left:** ***Lord DeVere (John Rodion, son of Basil Rathbone) gives his executioner, Mord (Boris Karloff) a tip: "Here is a groat, the smallest coin I know."*** **Below:** ***King Edward IV scores a rain-drenched victory at the Battle of Tewkesbury.***

Wyatt (John Sutton) is stretched on the rack after refusing to reveal to Richard the hiding place of the royal treasure. Mord officiates with the aid of Bunch (Donald Stuart).

cipal villain's role in their even bigger historical horror show, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame,* but he was already committed to *Rio* and *Tower.* In fact, he was also completing *Rio* during his first week's work on *Tower.*

Actors portraying Richard have varied his appearance and personality considerably. In early screen versions, stage stars Sir Frank Benson (1911) — a cousin of Rathbone — and Frederick Warde (1912) scuttled about, exploiting the character's misshapen body to the fullest. John Barrymore, in his famed Broadway version as well as a marvelous soliloquy filmed in 1930 for Warner Bros.' *The Show of Shows,* wore a huge hump on his back, but moved gracefully and presented an almost heroic monster. In the 1955 *Richard III,* Sir Laurence Olivier performed the character as a soft-spoken sneak with elongated nose, large hump, withered arm and deformed hand. In the 1995 version, Sir Ian MacKellen updated the black-hearted monarch as a Nazi.

Rathbone's Richard is a hearty man of action, a great swordsman hardly burdened by his hunched left shoulder. Behind a secret panel he keeps a small diorama of the throne room, with mannequins of the current monarch attended by the six in line of succession. Richard is last. When an heir is eliminated, whether through Richard's machinations or by attrition, Richard tosses the decedent's effigy into the fireplace and moves the others a step closer to the throne. His ambitions are shared only with his worshipful acolyte, Mord, executioner and constable of the tower, who tells him: "You're more than a duke to me, more than a king. You're like a god to me."

Mord is the only wholly fictitious major character in the movie. Jack Pierce, creator of Karloff's makeups for *Frankenstein, The Mummy, The Old Dark House* and other classic Universal chillers, manufactured Mord's grim visage. With a shaved head, hawk-like nose, flattened ears, huge shoulders, a twisted leg and a clubfoot, along with Karloff's inexplicable ability to seem larger than everyone else, Mord is an admirably terrifying heavy.

Tower of London closely resembles the Shakespeare version of Richard's tale, but is less complicated and offers updated, easier-to-follow dialogue. The story spans the years 1471-1485, opening before the Battle of Tewkesbury and closing after the Battle of Bosworth. King Edward IV (Ian Hunter) has usurped the throne and imprisoned feeble-minded King Henry VI (Miles Mander). When Edward orders the execution of Lord DeVere (John Rodion), John Wyatt (John Sutton) gets the permission of his cousin, Queen Elysabeth (Barbara O'Neil), to stand by the martyr on the gallows. This incurs the displeasure of Edward and his youngest brother, Richard of Gloucester. For political reasons, Edward orders Wyatt to marry an elderly dowager. Wyatt, who loves Lady Alice Barton (Nan Grey), the Queen's lady-in-waiting, refuses and is imprisoned in the tower.

When Henry's son, the Prince of Wales (G.P. Huntley), leads an invasion against the throne, Edward and Richard take Henry into battle, hoping he'll be killed. Richard, in love with Wales's wife, Anne Neville (Rose Hobart), kills his rival at Tewkesbury. Henry returns unscathed. George, Duke of Clarence (Vincent Price), Richard's older brother and husband of Anne's sister, Isobel (Frances Robinson), hides Anne. If Richard marries Anne, Clarence will be forced to divide the Neville estate.

Richard has Mord murder old Henry. Mord's spies find Anne, and she is tricked into marrying Richard. Following an argument, Richard challenges Clarence. Knowing Richard's prowess in combat, Clarence, a heavy drinker, chooses wine as his weapon. Richard loses the duel, but he and Mord drown Clarence in a butt of malmsey.

Six years later, after freeing Wyatt, Edward dies. His elder son, the young Prince Edward (Ronald Sinclair), becomes king, and Richard is made his protector. Fearing Richard, Elysabeth has Wyatt steal the king's treasure to help the exiled Henry Tudor (Ralph Forbes) against Richard. At Richard's command, Mord's men murder the boy king and his younger brother, Prince Richard (John Herbert-Bond). Wyatt is captured and tortured, but Alice, disguised as helper to chimneysweep Tom Clink (Ernest Cossart), helps him escape. Tudor marches on London. During the battle of Bosworth, Richard is killed by Tudor, and Mord dies by Wyatt's sword.

Ian Hunter, a burly South African, offers a brutal but high-spirited portrayal of King Edward, whose philosophy is "Marry your enemies and behead your friends." The queen is played by Barbara O'Neil, the dignified actress who portrayed Scarlett's mother in *Gone with the Wind.* Vincent Price, recently arrived in Hollywood after his stage successes in London and New York opposite Helen Hayes in *Victoria Regina,* is splendid as the cowardly, blubbering Clarence. Nan Grey, a lovely blonde from Texas, is a pleasing romantic lead even though she lacks an English accent. John Sutton, an India-born graduate of Sandhurst, former African white hunter and Far East tea plantation manager, is a natural for the heroic Wyatt.

Ernest Cossart provides good comic relief as

Tom Clink. Rose Hobart is lovely and sympathetic as the deluded Anne, a role severely shortened in the final cut. One of Mord's well-chosen henchmen is Al Brady, who also appeared in Warde's 1912 *Richard III*. John Rodion, impressive as the first victim of Mord's axe, was actually Rodion Rathbone, son of Basil. There's a nice moment when he is about to say his last words and the sheriff (Reginald Barlow) whispers, "Make it short, I pray you, so as not to tire the King." DeVere also tips Mord for his services: "Here is a groat, the smallest coin I know."

Miles Mander, fine as always, is the feeble King Henry, who is at prayer when Richard hands Mord his knife, saying, "It is an occasion for a blade in the shape of a cross. It will ensure the thrust and bless the wound." Henry's prayer is cut short and Richard finishes for him.

The drinking duel between Richard and Clarence is beautifully played. According to Vincent Price, Lee let the actors ad-lib much of the sequence, and filmed it in one day. In the wine cellar, the adversaries down large mugs drawn from a butt of malmsey. Richard becomes increasingly surly as the contest progresses, while Clarence becomes almost hysterical with laughter. Eventually, Richard passes out and Clarence crows his triumph. Richard revives, however, and slams Clarence to the floor. Mord emerges, and the evil allies dump Clarence into the vat. When Clarence comes up for air, they push him under and slam the lid. Listening to the man's dying bubbles, Richard mutters, "He asked for malmsey."

Price still had vivid recollections of the sequence some 30 years after the fact. "They used watered-down cola for the wine, and Basil and I had to drink quarts of it and slosh around in it," he remembered. "I can't stand the stuff to this day. Like a fool, I volunteered to do the drowning scene myself rather than be doubled. Basil and Boris were kidding me beforehand and took great delight in throwing their cigarette butts and other trash into the vat. The stunt coordinator told me that when they dumped me into the vat and slammed the lid down I was supposed to grab hold of a bar at the bottom and count to ten before coming up. After I did all that the lid was still closed! Then I heard the crew breaking in with axes. Boris had sat on it and Basil leaned on it and it got stuck. They managed to pull me out before I drowned."

The murder of the children, which upset many patrons, is less graphic than in some earlier versions of the tale. After the king goes to bed, the little Prince falls asleep while kneeling at prayer. Mord, horrified at what he must do, picks up the Prince tenderly and then tucks him into bed. He measures the older boy's height with his hands and goes outside to show his three assassins the proper size of the graves they must dig. Returning with the men, he is reluctant to carry out his orders, but suddenly regains his composure and pushes his minions forward.

Left: ***Richard and his advisors watch from the battlements as Mord rids his king of another enemy.*** **Bottom:** ***Boris Karloff, made up as Mord, makes mischief with makeup artist Jack Pierce and little singing star Gloria Jean.***

Great difficulties were involved in staging of the battles of Tewkesbury and Bosworth, which were filmed in August during a record heat wave that claimed several lives in Southern California. The censorship office warned the studio not to show much bloodshed in the battle scenes, and suggested that the filmmakers cover up the details by printing the scenes dark. Lee decided to film Tewkesbury in rain and Bosworth in fog, which would satisfy the censor's demands while yielding more picturesque visuals.

At 4 a.m. on August 19, principals, crew members, stuntmen and 300 costumed extras reported to a ranch at Tarzana, about 20 miles north of the studio. The early call was necessary to get the combatants and cameras in place on the uneven terrain, and to enable the special effects men to set up a battery of fog machines before the heat of day. Outdoor fog effects can be dicey due to the vagaries of wind, temperature and atmospheric conditions. Continuous gusts of wind shredded the fog. Only a few shots were attempted before Lee ordered the rain machines to be set up for the Battle of Tewkesbury. By then, the sun was high and the temperature hit 105°F.

When the water pump broke down, 300 increasingly angry men in armor milled around cursing under the blazing sun. After repairs were completed, the ground rapidly became a quagmire. Some of the extras reportedly wore papier mâché armor, which quickly deteriorated. Three days after this fiasco, Lee brought the extras back for another try, but soon gave up because of the heat.

Ford Beebe, Universal's serial producer-director, was brought in to do pickup shots and more warfare scenes. Somebody came up with an idea to rescue the battle scenes by intercutting new foreground action against process backgrounds of the original scenes. While not as spectacular as the original concept, the resulting montages are artisti-

Richard III suffers a fogbound death at the Battle of Bosworth.

cally appealing.

Costs had mounted to the extent that Lee was ordered to omit the wedding ceremony of the baby Prince Richard and Lady Mowbray. He finally was allowed to shoot the sequence, an impressive bit of pageantry, after promising to hurry the remaining scenes with the higher-paid players. After principal photography wrapped on September 4 — 10 days over schedule and about $80,000 over budget — Beebe was still making pickup shots. The studio chiefs were livid; unlike the other major studios, Universal didn't own a chain of theaters to play their own product, and therefore couldn't afford the huge budgets lavished by MGM, Paramount or Fox.

Musical director Charles Previn and composer Frank Skinner had decided to use the quaint styles and motifs of 15th-century music for the score. Hans Salter, a composer-conductor recently arrived from Germany, had assisted Skinner on the celebrated *Son of Frankenstein* music and was further involved in scoring *Tower of London*. Much of the music was played with period instruments, such as the recorder, the tiny spinet harpsichord, the viola d'amore and the viola de gamba. Triumphal marches were scored for trumpet, drums and male voices.

At a studio screening only a few days before the scheduled November 17 release date, company executives complained that the gentle music was inappropriate for a picture they intended to exploit as horrific. Previn was ordered to provide a full-blooded, menacing score. Lacking the time needed to compose and synchronize so much original music, Skinner, Salter and Previn worked around the clock rearranging music taken mostly from *Son of Frankenstein*. For example, the famous theme for the Monster's walk, paced more slowly, is equally effective for the measured tread of the club-footed Mord as he stalks through his dungeon. Skinner also utilized his love theme from the Charles Boyer-Irene Dunne drama, *When Tomorrow Comes* (1938), and some action cues from *The Sun Never Sets*. It all works very well. Unfortunately, the very recognizable hand-me-down cues — which were being recycled into B pictures and serials even then — along with leaks about the so-called "cardboard" armor, led to the idea, expressed by some historians, that the picture was made cheaply.

A few portions of the abandoned first score remain. The longest segments are the battle marches. The 20-voice St. Brendan's Boys Choir of Los Angeles sings traditional music for ceremonies at St. John's Chapel. Light period music is heard in a sequence involving Queen Elysabeth and the baby princes. The excised "Anne Neville Suite" surfaces in the 1940 sci-fi serial *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe*.

Despite some bad press, *Tower of London* has aged well and holds its own as a handsomely staged, beautifully acted picture from a vintage year. ◆

Credits

A Universal *picture; produced and directed by* Rowland V. Lee; *original story and screenplay by* Robert N. Lee; *director of photography,* George Robinson, ASC; *art director,* Jack Otterson; *associate,* Richard H. Riedel; *film editor,* Edward Curtiss; *set decorations,* Russell A. Gausman; *gowns,* Vera West; *assistant director,* Fred Frank; *technical advisors,* Major G.O.T. Bagley, Sir Gerald Grove, Bart.; *musical director,* Charles Previn; *orchestrations,* Frank Skinner; *sound supervisor,* Bernard B. Brown; *technician,* William Hedgcock; *matte effects,* Jack Cosgrove, ASC *and* Russell Lawson, ASC; process photography, George J. Teague, ASC; *second unit director,* Ford Beebe; *musical arrangements,* Hans J. Salter; *operative cameraman,* Edward Colman, ASC; *makeup artists,* Jack P. Pierce, Otto Lederer, Sam Kaufman; *fencing master,* Fred Cavens; Western Electric *recording. Running time, 92 minutes. Premiered December 13, 1939.*

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Basil Rathbone; *Mord,* Boris Karloff; *Queen Elysabeth,* Barbara O'Neil; *King Edward IV,* Ian Hunter; *Duke of Clarence,* Vincent Price; *Lady Alice Barton,* Nan Grey; *Tom Clink,* Ernest Cossart; *John Wyatt,* John Sutton; *Anne Neville,* Rose Hobart; *Lord Hastings,* Leo G. Carroll; *King Henry VI,* Miles Mander; *Beacon,* Lionel Belmore; *Boy King Edward,* Ronald Sinclair; *Prince Richard,* John Herbert-Bond; *Henry Tudor,* Ralph Forbes; *Duchess Isabel,* Frances Robinson; *Wales,* G. P. Huntley; *Lord DeVere,* John Rodion; *Chimney Sweep,* Walter Tetley; *Duke of York,* Donnie Dunagan; *Cardinal,* Howard Brooks; *Dowager,* Georgia Caine; *Anne's Protector,* Ivan Simpson; *Archbishop (St. John's Chapel),* Nigel DeBrulier; *Councilman,* Holmes Herbert; *Father Olmstead,* Robert Greig; *Sheriff,* Reginald Barlow; *Torturer Bunch,* Donald Stuart; *Majordomo,* C. Montague Shaw; *Henry VI's Servant,* Michael Mark; *Councilman,* Charles Miller; *Haberdeer,* Ivo Henderson; *Page Boy,* Charles Peck; *Ladies in Waiting,* Louise Brien, Jean Fenwick; *Woman,* Sibyl Harris; *Lady Mowbray,* Joan Carroll; *Princesses,* Venetia Severn, Yvonne Severn; *Tyrrell,* Harry Cording; *Forrest,* Jack C. Smith; *Councilman,* Arthur Mulliner; *Soldiers,* Colin Kenny, Arthur Stenning, Frank Hagney, Guy York Jr.; *Princess,* Ann Todd; *Gate Guards,* Stanley Blystone, Richard Alexander; *Moat Guard,* George Lloyd; *Beggars,* Ed Brady, Denis Tankard, David Thursby, Patrick J. Kelly, Major Fred Farrell, Ted Billings, James Mason, Merrill McCormick; *Beggar Woman,* Evelyn Selbie; *Prisoners,* Ernie Adams, Cyril Thornton; *Civilian Woman,* Claire Whitney; *Priest,* Francis Powers; *Cleric,* Al Ferguson; *Councilmen,* Claud Payton, Murdock MacQuarrie, Harry Bailey; *Priest,* Edgar Sherrod; *Dighton,* Marty Faust; *Sexton,* Russ Powell; *Spy,* John George; *Page,* Schuyler Standish; *Woman,* Carolyn Cooke; *Church Singers,* St. Brendan's Boys Choir of Los Angeles.

Note: *Information for parts of this article were provided over several decades by Basil Rathbone, Vincent Price, Nan Grey Laine, John Sutton, Miles Mander, Hans J. Salter and Edward Colman, ASC.*

Hot Diggity Dogs

by Mary Hardesty

In Wienerschnitzel's latest 30-second commercial, "Anointed," dawn breaks and shimmering sunlight spreads across the Serengeti Plain, where the ground is covered by a thundering herd of... hot dogs. Hamburgers and french fries join the flocking franks to bathe in a mammoth, simmering pot of chili, as a voice-over notes, "Each year, 59 million gather to be anointed... customers can now get a Wienerschnitzel chili cheese dog and chili cheeseburger for just two dollars."

Director Oscar Bassinson and cameraman Tim Eaton shot the commercial in one long day, using a stage covered with hardpacked earth and vibrant lighting to simulate the glorious Tanzanian landscape. In an unusual move, the duo decided to create all of the food's movements live, using hidden off-camera devices or mechanisms hidden beneath the artificial veldt.

"This spot has a lot of physical gags, and was really fun to shoot," says Eaton, who has worked with Bassinson on numerous occasions. "We looked at a lot of options for moving the food — from stop-motion to CGI — and decided that the smartest and surest thing would be to do it all in-camera."

Bassinson notes, "We tried to use a method of motion that wouldn't repeat in any particular editorial choice. We did a lot of it with strings, using foreground objects to conceal our rigs in the middle ground. It also helped when we put all of the hot dogs on little silicon discs to make them slide more easily."

To achieve the effect of fast food headed to a ceremonial chili pot, a crew of seven wiener wranglers hid off-camera or under the raised "Serengeti" platform. "Sometimes we pushed the dogs so you could see their fronts," says Eaton. "We didn't want the audience to figure out how we were doing it."

The spot begins at dawn. Eaton recalls, "We initially lit the scene to be a bit cold; we put a jib arm-mounted Xenon on a dimmer and dialed it up to create the effect of the sun rising. One of the interesting problems we had was when we tried to follow the hot dog herd with the camera [from above]. If you're shooting real animals from a helicopter, you see their heads and legs in relationship to the dust. But in this situation, even though we were moving and the food was moving, detecting the movement of the hot dogs was very tough. Making them look as if they were stampeding involved a very delicate balancing act. It sometimes ended up looking as if nothing was moving because of the terrain's structure. We couldn't add a lot of miniature shrubs to the foreground because the hot dogs would be obscured, so we moved the camera up and down as the puppeteers wiggled the dogs to make them appear to be running."

One of the trickiest scenes to execute featured all three food elements moving in-shot simultaneously. "In the upper left-hand corner we had a spatula-like rig moving the fries forward, while the hot dogs were being pulled and the hamburgers were being pushed," notes Bassinson. "If you were to film it as a wide shot, you would see the string, the spatula and the pushing mechanism, but we shot it very tight. The beginning and ending points were later cut out in post."

Bassinson recalls another problem he had with his rigid stars: "I wanted the hot dogs to turn in order to dispel the notion that they were being pulled or pushed, but they just wouldn't bend. So we routed out curves in the stage and had the wranglers pull the strings [along these grooves] from underneath. The wranglers got to know each other very well in that hot, tight space."

Eaton's least favorite character to light in this spot was the chili. "It had a consistently dull color, and the texture gave it lots of shadows," notes the cinematographer, who employed Kodak's fine-grained Vision 5279 film stock. "The

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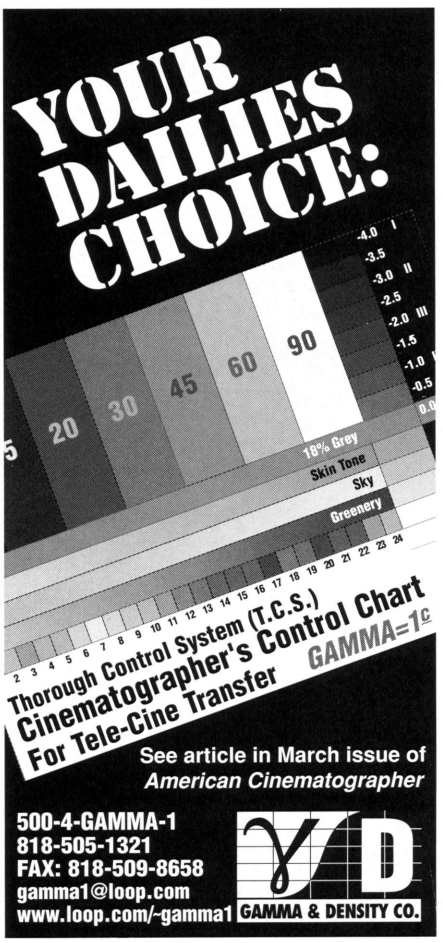

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79 is tremendous if you expose it well, but you have to be careful with it when shooting foods like chili, which is in the mid to dark range to begin with; only a few stops will bring it down to black."

The flame under the pot also posed a lighting problem. Eaton recalls, "Oscar wanted the slowly rising sun to become the flame, but to get the gas flames to show up, we had to augment them with a few 2Ks on a flicker box. We also used some 250 diffusion and bounced the light off a sheet of Mylar that my grip, Kelly Waldman, shook."

An Arriflex 35-III camera fitted with Zeiss-made Arri Macro lenses was used for the "Anointed" shoot. Eaton also used a set of Claremont Superscope lenses for the shots of the chili pot. "When I'm doing spots involving food, I sometimes use Panavision with Primo close-focus lenses," he notes. "Panavision often is a little bit more user-friendly, but in this case I went with the Arri because of its exposure-compensating macros." (The 50, 100 and 200mm focal lengths in this lens series incorporate specially designed "floating" elements that automatically adjust both focus and iris to maintain correct exposure throughout the focus range.)

Eaton offers a few suggestions for shooting simmering pots of chili: "If you can have the chili moving, or spread it on something, that's helpful. Another trick is to mix harder, more dramatic light with softer light to fill in the shadows. I often use Xenons or 10Ks, which are more controllable, as my key lights. To break up the light, we mounted a lot of two-inch mini-mirrors on armature wire, and then put those just off-camera on C-stands, blocks of wood or baby plates so we could bounce the light where we needed it. I was concerned that the crew would have to paint out the industrial burner under the pot, but Kelly was able to hide the pipe with lava rock. I also shot a cover background plate with and without the pot and flame. As it turned out, the post guys didn't need it, but the more you can give them, the better." ◆

30-second spot: "Anointed"
Client: Wienerschnitzel
Director of photography: Tim Eaton
Director: Oscar Bassinson
Production Company: Shadowrock Productions
Agency: dGWB Advertising

complied by Lisa Sibert

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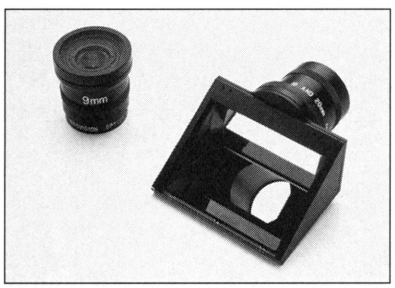

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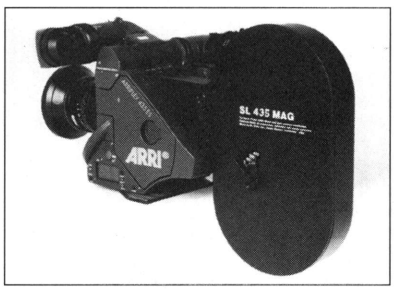

Lightweight Mag for Arri 435

SL Cine introduces the 400' SL-435, the lightest weight Steadicam-style magazine made for the Arriflex 435. Fabricated from ultra-light magnesium, the 400' SL-435 magazine weighs under three pounds.

Designed with an extended throat for vertical film load, the mag is intended for Steadicam, remote and low-profile operation. The magazine measures 12.5"L x 11.5"H x 3.2"W (31cm x 29.5cm x 8cm). It features a manual footage-used scale and has a speed range of 0-130fps.

SL Cine Inc., (213) 733-7088, Fax (213) 733-1462.

Transit Cases

Calzone Case Company (CCC) now offers the Diamond Series Pro-Tour transit case. Developed with feedback from CCC's touring clients, the cases are designed and engineered in ½" thickness for musical, video, pro audio, computer and industrial applications. Interior compartments are lined with two-pound, high-quality ester and etha foams. The interior dividers are ½" plywood and capped with aluminum u-mold for durability. A diamond texture is routed into the top ply, eliminating the possibility of lamination deficiencies. Large recessed MOL automatic movement latches are offered for ease in opening and closing the case.

Calzone Case Company, (800) 521-3818, Fax (818) 890-1847.

Noise Reduction Plug-In Upgraded

Sonic Foundry debuted its updated Noise Reduction Plug-In as a DirectX Audio Plug-In at NAMM Show '97. The retooled software now features real-time previews and operates with any editor that supports DirectX Audio Plug-Ins, including Sonic Foundry's Sound Forge 4.0.

The Noise Reduction Plug-In allows users to remove distracting audio flaws with minimal effect on the source material. With real-time previews, editors can constantly monitor and adjust audio signals to achieve noise-free audio with a minimum of artifacting.

The program retains the three main functions of the original. One of these functions is Noise Reduction (Broadband), used for the removal of constant background audio such as tape hiss, electrical hum and machinery rumble. Audio is separated into its frequency components to distinguish desired from unwanted signals. A noiseprint of the unwanted audio can be applied to the entire file, or a specific selection, to filter out unwanted noise. Adjustable settings allow for customized filtering.

The Click Removal Tool detects and removes the clicks and pops commonly found in damaged digital recordings. Glitches can be manually or

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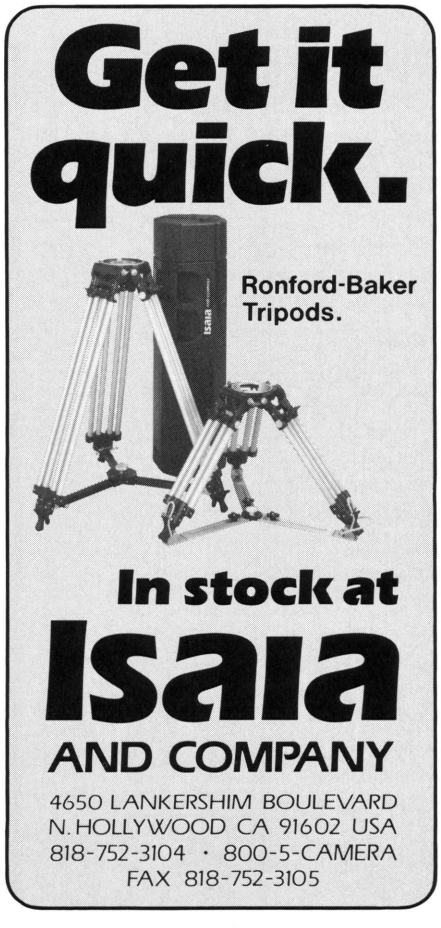

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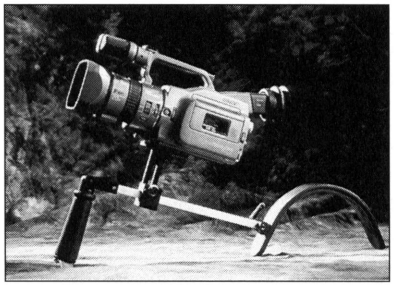
The Vinyl Restoration Tool removes clicks, pops and broadband surface noise with advanced filtering techniques tuned to restore vinyl recordings to their original clarity. Independent controls for glitch sensitivity and surface noise levels, plus variable noise floor and attack/release speeds, allow for recording and listening biases.

Sonic Foundry, (608) 256-3133, Fax (608) 256-7300, www.sfoundry.com.



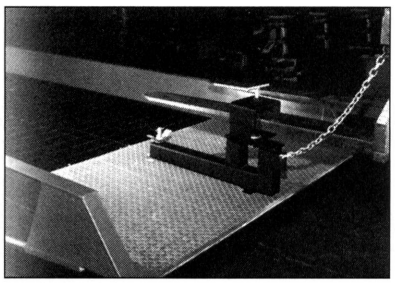
Mightywondercam

Videosmith of Philadelphia has introduced the Mightywondercam Shoulder Pod System for small camcorders. This unique lightweight rig provides a comfortable and stable platform for small camcorders, such as the popular Sony VX-1000 and Canon L-series. The pod helps users make steadier pictures, and gives them seven places to mount accessories.

The Mightywondercam has an adjustable hand grip and a sliding camera platform. The rail and platform have multiple mounting points for accessories like microphones, lights and LCD monitors. The rubber-cushioned shoulder rest also has an attachment point for battery packs and radio mike receivers. Five axes of adjustment make customizing the fit for an individual user a simple task.

Models available include the Vbasic and the Turbo (which has a 12vdc to 7vdc converter and a battery box for long-life NP-1 nicad batteries). A full range of accessories has been developed, including microphone and light mounts, special lightweight audio cables, and battery holders for products like the Bescor Juice Box JB4.

Videosmith, (215) 238-5070, Fax (215) 238-5075, vsmith@videosmith.com.



Mobile Dock Hitch and Folding Nose

Magline, Inc. announces a new hitch for its Mobile Dock yard ramps. The Mobile Dock Hitch is an alternative to the standard Towbar that is provided with each Mobile Dock.

The new Mobile Dock Fork Truck Hitch mounts in the low end of the Mobile Dock and permits easy movement of the Dock using truck lift forks. Use of the hitch will protect the Dock against damage from pushing the Dock with forks, and facilitates control and safety for the lift truck operator. The hitch is self-storing on the side of the Dock, and installation is fast. It can be retrofitted to existing Magliner Mobile Docks.

Magline also introduces a recessed folding nose extension for its line of aluminum hand trucks. The recessed folding nose folds out of the way and does not interfere with the front of the frame or take space away from the noseplate. When in use, it has a 300-pound capacity. The standard hand truck has a 500-pound capacity when the recessed folding nose is not in use. It is adaptable to existing Magliners.

Magline, Inc., (800) MAGLINE, (517) 879-2411, Fax (517) 879-5399.

Camera Tracking Systems

P.O.V. @ MAT is a cooperation between MAT, a German company specializing in camera support equipment, and Matthews Studio Electronics in Los Angeles. The firm offers a range of camera tracking systems. The equipment is created by MAT and is exclusively rented out by P.O.V. @ MAT and its agencies.

Two of the four systems included in the range of camera tracking systems are the Cruisecam I and the Liftcam. The Cruisecam I is a motor-assisted dolly which runs on straight tracks (standard tracks: 62cm/ 2 ft. wide). The system offers a variety of detachable platforms, which either carry a remote-head or a seat swivel support (allowing

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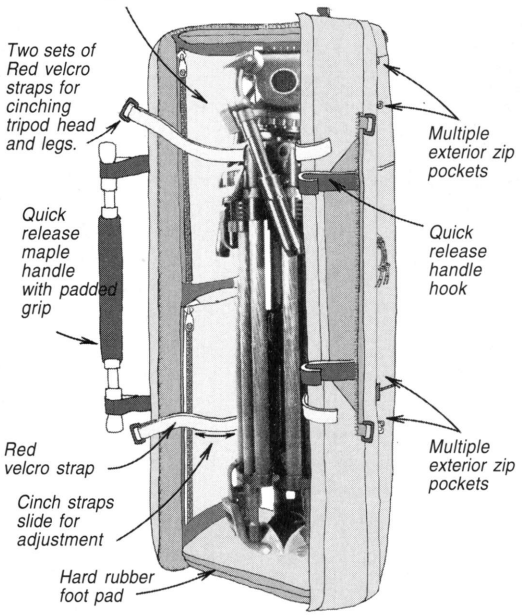
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the camera operator to travel with the dolly). The powerful motor gives the system a maximum speed of about 15 m.p.h.

Liftcam is a new camera positioning system with smooth vertical and diagonal camera tracking. Acceleration, speed, dolly position, etc. can be controlled individually. Liftcam offers amazing variations of camera angles and meets all customary safety standards.

Matthews Studio Electronics, (818) 623-1661, Fax (818) 623-1671.

MAT (Germany), (49) 040-540-8220.

One Box Does the Lot

Digital Assist of New Zealand announces the release of Monty, a totally digital, purpose-built, stand-alone video assist unit. Some of Monty's core functions and benefits over old-style analog systems include a rock-steady varispeed playback, forward or reverse, at any frame rate (including 24 fps). When a director marks the in/out points of any shot, it is possible to determine a shot's exact duration at any speed (for example, three seconds and six frames).

On-set shot assembly allows a director to execute a quick cut between any number of shots to determine if a sequence is working. Previously captured shots are instantly recalled at the click of a mouse, and a wide range of transitions are available, such as 15-frame dissolves.

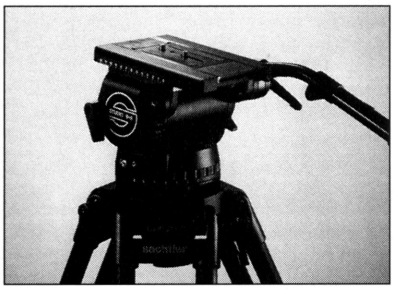
Monty accepts time code in LTC or VITC format and attaches it to a shot. If desired, an edit decision list can be created before leaving the set. With Monty, it is also possible to accurately determine if an on-camera speed ramp is

working before celluloid is spent.

The mixer function allows an operator to apply horizontal, vertical or custom wipes, straight overlays or live keys off any color. All mixer functions are real-time and are applied from a combination of live picture, playback or still image. Previously captured shots can be flipped/flopped and mixed with live. The on-screen real-time monitor lets the operator preview a mix before choosing which floor monitors to output on.

With 3 ½ hours of audio and video hard drive space available, stock footage, logos, audio tracks, etc., can be easily added on the portable, lightweight unit. External flight case measurements are 52 x 25 x 33 cm. Monty is battery-operable and is accepted by most airlines as carry-on luggage.

Digital Assist, (64) 9-4898-641, Fax (64) 9-4863-603.



New Film Heads

Just in time for the Munich film exhibition CINEC, Sachtler AG introduces a new fluid head for film cameramen. The Studio 9+9 for all 16/35mm cameras combines perfected counterbalance, 90-degree tilt and a self-illuminating "Touch Bubble."

The patented Sachtler damping has been considerably increased and, as the name suggests, the number of steps has been raised to nine. The steps between two and seven are fairly fine, whereas the jump from seven to nine is much greater.

Centering the weight of the camera is now achieved via a spindle drive, which is safer to adjust and more precise. The counterbalance system is a combination of the established Sachtler system and a new dial knob system. Both systems compensate for any camera load up to 110 lbs (50 kgs). Connections to a viewfinder extension and front box are standard on all heads.

Sachtler AG, (89) 32-15-82-41, Fax (89) 32-15-82-27.

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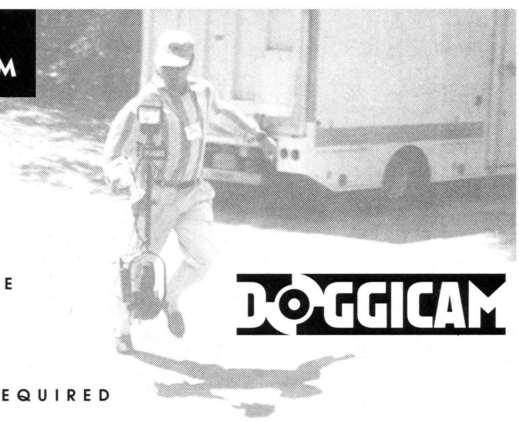

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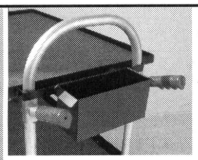
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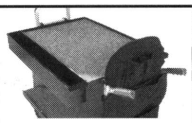
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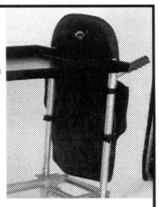
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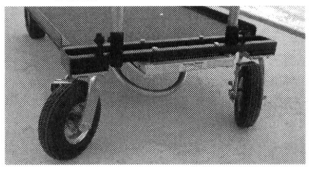
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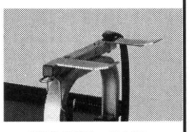
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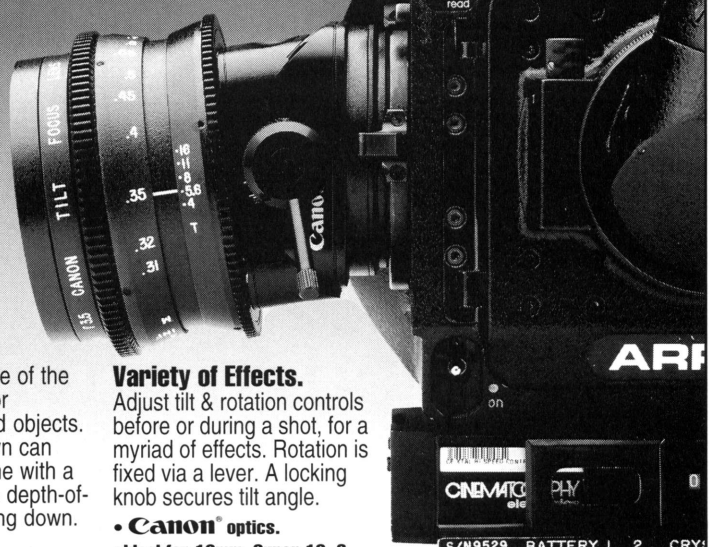

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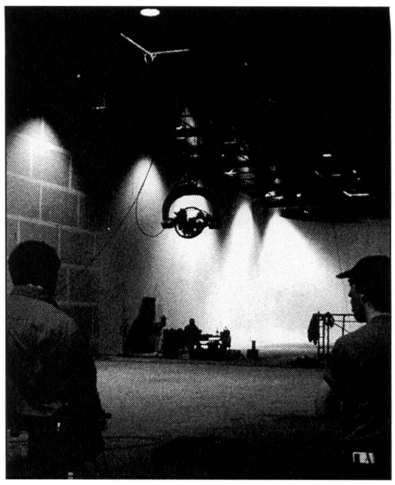

Repeat Motion Multi-Axis Aerial Camera Systems

Fly'n Gate, Inc. introduces a line of readied camera systems. All of the aerial systems can be controlled by computer or manually, with the camera operator at the camera or manipulating the remote head during the shot. The following is a breakdown of some of the readied systems and the applications they are most suited for.

The Rmacs 312 sport system is a hybrid utilizing both the vertical and horizontal as well as fully remote pan/tilt, giving four axes of constant motion. Lightweight construction enables this system to be easily installed at any venue. By incorporating gyrostabilization, greater shot diversity using longer lenses can be achieved. All camera control is via a one-man microwaved remote console, which controls pan/tilt, zoom, focus and iris as well as a video feed. The system is ultimately suited for broadcast of sports and other live events.

The Rmacs 310 is an elevator-style system used for vertical movement, e.g. outside of buildings, bridge abutments, or a rock face. The two vertical guide lines are secured above and/or below the set. The mount will ascend or descend on its path with the pan/tilt function available. This design provides maximum stability while allowing for greater speeds and longer runs.

The Rmacs 210 uses a horizontal hi-line hung in order to track at a determined height above or to the side of the shooting area. The remote head on the travellers can be hard-wired or R/C 'ed back to the controller. By adding different style cabling to the hi-line, a vertical axis can be added

through deflection.

The Rmacs 301 & 201 systems are the same as the above-mentioned rigs; the difference is that the camera operator is actually at the camera. Since the best way to be sure of the shot is to allow the operator to be part of the motion, the operator can keep an eye to the lens and an eye on the action framed in the heads-up display. This allows for freer movement of the camera during flight.

The main function of the final system, the Rmacs 101, is to add natural or completely unnatural movement to a number of objects. This system, along with a chroma key background and one of the other camera systems, allows for the capture of such things as an epic aerial dogfight or talent getting blown from their cockpit.

Due to the flexible nature of the systems, Fly'n Gate can configure a system to work within specific limitations of length, height, space or amount of vertical movement.

Fly'n Gate, Inc., (416) 486-6617, Fax (416) 482-9282.

Color Correction Solution

Sprocket Digital's Professional Video Services Group announces the availability of Kodak's new Telecine Shading Correction Filter. The filter provides a simple, low-cost optical solution to improving color uniformity of telecine transfers on all models of Cintel flying-spot scanners. As an added exclusive, Sprocket Digital provides an extremely flat 21-step grayscale test film with each filter.

Sprocket Digital assisted Kodak in field testing and evaluation of the filter prior to its final release. These field tests, performed at several of L.A.'s busiest postproduction facilities, confirmed the effectiveness of the Shading Correction Filter.

The test film included with each filter was developed by Sprocket Digital and is unique in that each frame is at one grayscale level. Printed on Kodak 5244 stock, it can be used as both a negative and positive test film, and allows shading to be easily evaluated under a wide range of operating conditions.

Sprocket Digital, (818) 566-7700, Fax (818) 566-4477. ◆

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35 MM REFLEX

The Fries model 435 is a new general purpose MOS production 35mm camera. With its optical printer compatible register pins, steadiness and 150 FPS speed. The 435 is ideally suited for special effects, commercials or any photography where a quality steady image is desired.

The 435 is a spinning mirror reflex camera with a 170 degree blanking shutter. The internal 30VDC motor runs the camera from 2 to 150 FPS forward and 2 to 50 FPS reverse, in one frame increments all crystal. The camera is equipped with take-up and supply torque motors.

There are both 1000 ft. and 400 ft. displacement type magazines. A new feature is the light valve which allows the operator to direct all the light to the viewing system, or to the video assist, or combo which splits the light between both viewing and video assist.

35 mm, Reflex Camera

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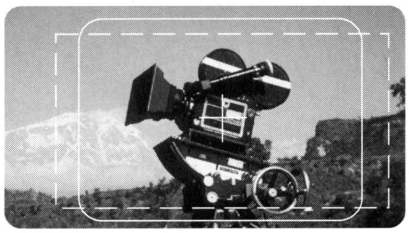

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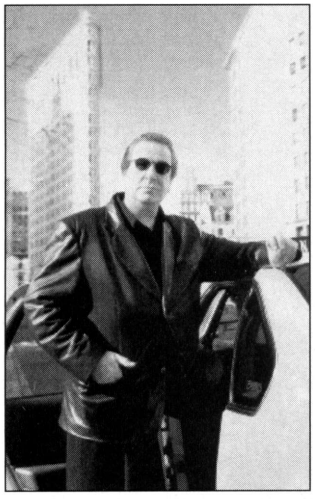
Dellaventura Breaks Cop-Show Mold

by Eric Rudolph

Network television, well-known for reliably aping successful program formulas and visual styles, will feature a detective show with a startling and distinctively different look this season. *Dellaventura,* starring film actor Danny Aiello, is not a typically gritty, jittery urban crime series. As creator and executive producer Richard DiLello notes, "It's not noir and dark and foreboding. I wanted to have New York City photographed in a warmer and more welcoming way."



Danny Aiello plays tough-as-nails private investigator Dellaventura.

The show focuses on Anthony Dellaventura (Aiello), a retired New York cop turned private investigator. Dellaventura the P.I. has built his reputation by handling problems that the NYPD cannot, or will not, touch. Together with a group of younger operatives, Dellaventura champions the little guy, and tempers his over-the-top toughness ("The only thing I'll back away from is an oncoming subway train") with compassion and pungent humor.

DiLello hired accomplished cinematographer Edward J. Pei, ASC to create a new look for the urban crime genre, signing him up for the pilot and the first few episodes. DiLello discussed his general ideas about the look of the show with Pei, telling him, "I'd like it to look as if Gordon Willis [ASC] had photographed it today." Says the producer, "I wanted a softer, alternative cop-show look." He left the rest up to his sure-handed cinematographer, whose credits include the ASC Award-winning miniseries *Streets of Laredo,* the Cable ACE Award-winning series *Veronica Claire,* the Emmy-nominated miniseries *Stephen King's The Stand,* the ASC Award-nominated *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All (Part 2)* and the feature film *Panther.*

DiLello, who once worked as a still photographer, has fostered a reputation as a visually adventurous producer. One of his previous shows, *DEA* (which ran for 13 weeks on Fox in 1990) mixed 8mm, 16mm and 35mm film, and used a great deal of moving camera. "*DEA* was a distinctive-looking show, and got a lot of attention for that in the press and the industry," DiLello notes. "However, I knew that a CBS audience was not the same as the audience for a police show on Fox, so we decided to go in another direction with *Dellaventura.*"

The producer got his wish; his new show looks like no other series on television, and certainly has a look that's unprecedented for a New-York based cop saga.

To meet DiLello's visual challenge, Pei developed an unusual and distinctive approach. For starters, every scene is shot with a black net behind the lens. "The net, which is actually a piece of stocking, gives a glow to the city, day or night," Pei explains. "It also softens the image and makes the highlights bloom a little. With a strong highlight, the net creates a rainbow kick, adding a little color. Overall, it creates a softer, more romantic look." Pei does have to be careful not to shoot at small apertures. "If you go below f8, you run the risk of being able to see the net," he notes.

The use of the net creates the show's most striking visual signature — a soft, diffused look that is quite unusual for a series set in Manhattan. The net also helps to create a bit of emotional distance, making the show's larger-than-life heroics — which take place in such a familiar real-world setting — a bit easier to accept.

Another of the show's dramatic touches is the use of single light sources, with little fill and often no backlight. "I wanted bright highlights and dark blacks, and a good deal of contrast," says Pei. "The deep darks we get from little or no fill makes the key light stand out." It is a look that is "directly opposed to the flat, frontal glamour lighting that was common on TV a few years back."

Pei's basic lighting approach is therefore quite simple: "Typically, I will bring in a 5K and diffuse it with several muslin layers. We position the light three-quarters to the front or side of the actors, so we can just catch a glint from their other eye."

The cinematographer's use of backlight depends upon its logical motivation. "If we're in a small New York apartment, it's hard to justify a big backlight," he says.

In addition to lending the show a distinctive look, Pei's single-source approach helps keep the production on schedule by reducing the amount of time required for lighting.

Dellaventura offsets the added costs of full-time New York City location shooting by using Fuji stock, which Pei estimates to be "about 20 percent" less expensive than Kodak film. "I've used Fuji before, and I'm comfortable with it," he maintains. "Fuji is a little less sharp and more contrasty than Kodak, which makes it good for our rich, creamy look. The tonal range is the same."

Pei has also made extensive use of the Body Cam, a gyrostabilized device similar to a Steadicam that has not yet been widely employed for television work. "The camera is attached to a device that is somewhat rigidly strapped to the body," he explains. "It allows the operator to run more quickly, with improved steadiness. To turn the camera, the operator turns his body. It does limit the up and down movement somewhat."

The pilot show is energized by the judicious use of 180- and 360-degree

sweeps that grab a viewer's attention, thanks to the Body Cam. The device is also used for less dramatic camera moves. "We use it on two or three shots a day, maybe 25 percent of the time," Pei says. Handheld work, a favorite device of urban police show, is mostly avoided. "Handheld does not fit in with the smooth, glossy look we are after," the cinematographer explains.

Dellaventura is being shot in Super 35 with "protection" for the 16:9 HDTV format. Pei notes, "I say 'protection' because really I'm shooting for the standard square television format of today, while making sure the area in the 16:9 frame line in my viewfinder is also well-lit and includes no light stands or gear. It is hard to shoot for both standard and widescreen formats at the same time."

Pei's A-camera is a Panaflex GII equipped with a full set of Panavision primes and the 4:1 and 11:1 Primo zooms. "It is unusual, and wonderful, to have a full set of prime lenses on a weekly television show," he enthuses.

Another unique aspect of *Dellaventura* is that the show is shot almost entirely on real streets in and around New York City. The production spends "one day out of eight on a set."

Working in the Big Apple would not be possible without a crack crew, and Pei touts his as "the best in New York." His collaborators include AC Douglas Pellegrino, A-camera and Body Cam operator John Herron, gaffer Marc Rogers and key grip John Lowry.

Pei maintains that his toughest challenge on the show has been the logistics of shooting on congested streets. "The main problems are the time lost in traffic, and the delays in trying to shoot anything involving moving vehicles," he attests.

The cinematographer is quick to add, however, that the extensive location work offers just as many advantages. "We're not afraid of going from bright sun to the deep shade of a skyscraper, which is a typical lighting scenario on the streets of Manhattan. It produces a unusual and eye-catching layered effect that we like a great deal. The backgrounds in Los Angeles get kind of boring after awhile; in New York, you can point the camera anywhere and get an interesting shot." ◆

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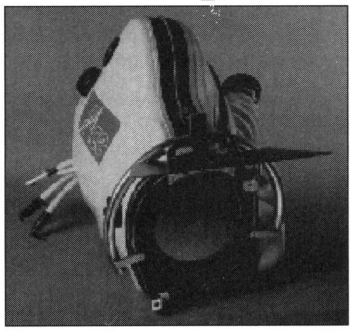

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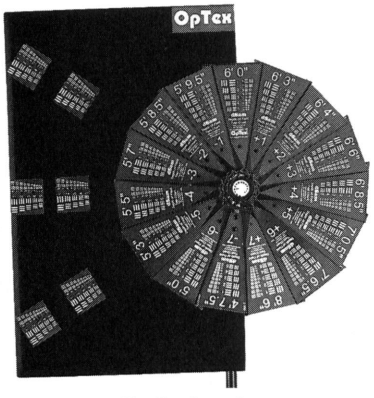

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Books in Review

by George Turner

Howard Hawks:
The Grey Fox of Hollywood
by Todd McCarthy
Grove, 756 pps., cloth, $35

Variety's Todd McCarthy is one of the movie industry's truly knowledgable and down-to-earth historians, as well as the author of two fine documentary films: *Visions of Light: The Art of Cinematography* and *Preston Sturges: The Rise and Fall of an American Dreamer.* Needless to say, his new biography of director Howard Hawks is worth its considerable weight in good information. Superbly researched and meticulously detailed, it contains many interviews with people who were there when things happened, and is surprisingly even-handed, considering the multifaceted person it profiles.

One big chore faced by a Hawks biographer is that he must try to separate the legends from the facts. Like many an iconoclastic celebrity, Hawks tended to embellish his own image, mixing in a lot of fiction when relating his adventures. It's difficult to tell how well McCarthy was able to traverse this minefield, but the general impression is that he did a good job of ferreting out the truth. Hawks emerges as a rich, spoiled brat who grew up to be an iron-willed and uncompromising moviemaker. As a director, he could function happily as a partner of Howard Hughes, but not as a minion of Samuel Goldwyn or Louis B. Mayer. Hawks was an incurable gambler, an unregenerate skirt-chaser, co-founder of a high-class motorcycle gang, and a paragon of independence. He also showed a marked preference for independent women.

Certainly, Hawks was a starmaker. He influenced or boosted the careers of Carole Lombard, Lauren Bacall, Paul Muni, Rita Hayworth, George Raft, Boris Karloff, Frances Farmer, Ella Raines, James Caan, Angie Dickinson, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Walter Brennan and Montgomery Clift.

Despite his imposing body of work, Hawks never received the adulation lavished upon, say, Capra or Hitchcock, and the coveted Oscar eluded him entirely. One reason for this, it is suggested, was his versatility — a virtue that apparently equates to "hack" in the eyes of many arbiters of taste.

There are numerous mentions throughout the book of the people Hawks worked with, including cinematographers and, especially, writers. This tome rates high marks for biographical writing.

Howard Hawks,
American Artist
Edited by Jim Hillier
and Peter Wollen
Indiana University Press,
220 pps., cloth, $45,
paper, $19.95

Howard Hawks again! This opus is a collection of 30 writings about the man and his work that have appeared in books and periodicals; these were gathered for a volume originally published last year by the British Film Institute. Most of the contributors are well-known critics from hither and yon (especially yon), and from the aggregate one can extract a refreshing variety of opinions. There is much *auteurist* stuff, some well-reasoned thinking, several feminist tracts and a few determined searches for sexual "subtexts" of one kind or the other. The sampler's blessings are mixed: if one writer's ideas leave you growling, the next selection may restore your usual mellow state of mind — or perhaps make it worse.

Incidentally, the coined word "Hawksian" is evoked by just about everybody involved, and its use begins to grate after the first few appearances. One writer — French critic André Bazin, no less — even comes up with 'Hitchcocko-Hawksian." Among the contributors of Hawksological commentary are Graham Greene, Leigh Brackett, James Agee, Andrew Sarris, Manny Farber, Robin Wood and others who range from interesting to intolerable.

There is also a new introduction, a filmography and a bibliography.

Before, In and After Hollywood
by Joseph Henabery, edited by Anthony Slide
Scarecrow, 392 pps., cloth, $55

For every Hitchcock or Capra, there are thousands of men and women who make unique contributions to the film industry, but remain unsung and overlooked when the title credits are printed. Such a man was Joseph E. Henabery, whose name rings a bell with most film scholars only because he played Abraham Lincoln in *Birth of a Nation* and was an assistant to D. W. Griffith on *Intolerance.* In truth, Henabery was a director, screenwriter, researcher, makeup artist, architect, set designer, special effects artist and pioneer of talking pictures.

He came to Hollywood from Omaha, Nebraska in 1914, and first worked as an extra. Two years later, Henabery was directing for Triangle-Fine Arts, and then for Paramount, where he directed or wrote some of the best films of Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Jack Holt, Fatty Arbuckle and Rudolph Valentino. He followed this stint with several years of free-lancing.

Henabery had made some 50 features before he joined Warner Bros., which sent him to their Brooklyn studio to make one- and two-reel talkie shorts. From 1931-1939 he made more than 100 of these miniatures: dramas, comedies, musicals, novelty reels, etc. Among these were two very popular and long-running series: the *S.S. Van Dine Mysteries,* which featured little Donald Meek as a mild-mannered but smart detective, and the *Floyd Gibbons' True-Life Adventures.* Now that the form is virtually extinct, it's hard to grasp how important short subjects were to theatrical exhibition. Henabery returned to make one last feature in 1943, a good Hopalong Cassidy Western called *The Leather Burners.* In his later years he made training films for the U.S. Army. He died in 1976 at the age of 88.

Henabery may not have been John Ford, but so what? This is one of the more interesting and insightful movie histories yet published. ◆

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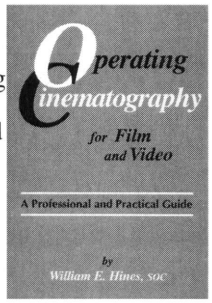

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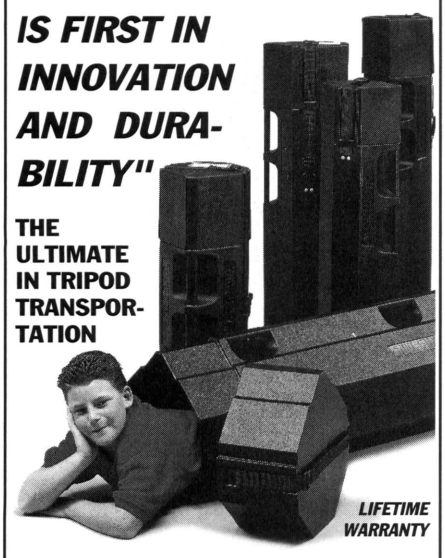

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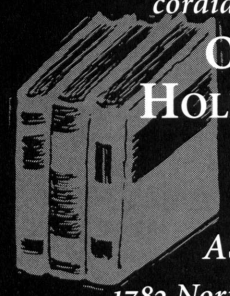

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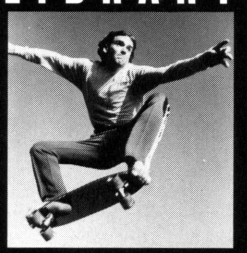

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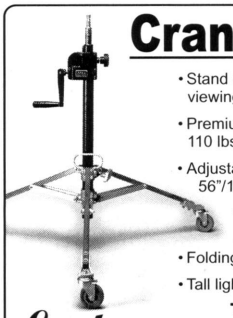

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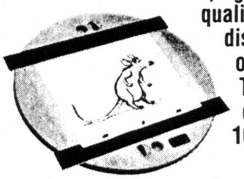

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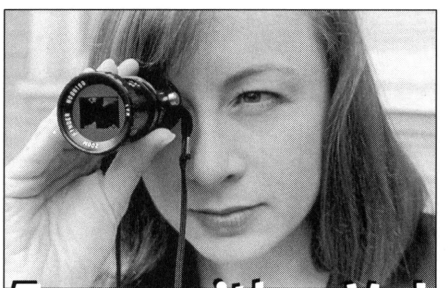

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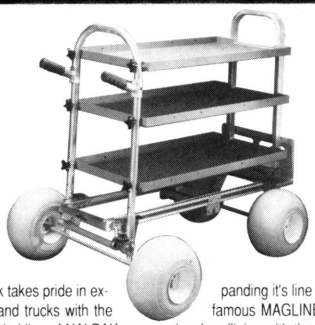

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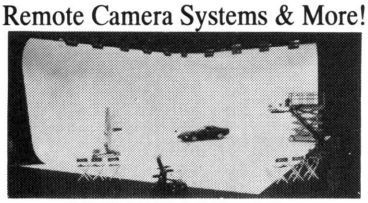

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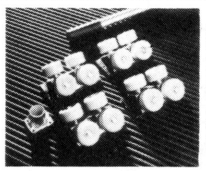
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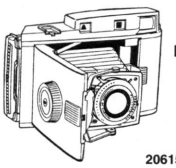
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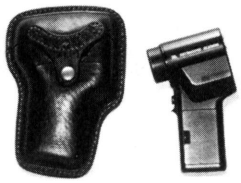
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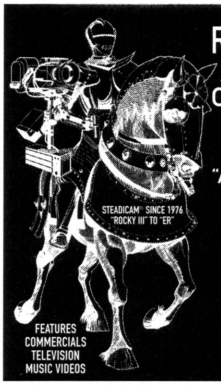
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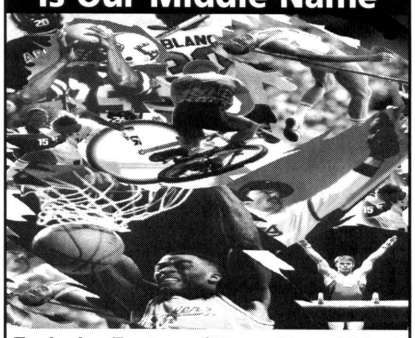

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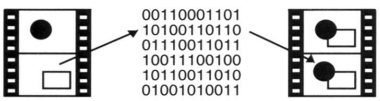

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From the Clubhouse

Pei Joins ASC

The ASC's latest member is Edward J. Pei, a native of Taipei, Taiwan. The cameraman inherited his love for cinema from his father, a vice admiral in the Nationalist Chinese Navy whose favorite pastime was taking his family to the cinema. After receiving a journalism degree from a college in his homeland, Pei worked as a reporter for China-TV news. In 1979, he emigrated to America to study film production at New York University's graduate film school. Six months later, he scored his first on-set job as a 2nd A C for *Friday the 13th — Part V.* For the next six years, he studied under the tutelage of Larry Pizer on numerous productions, and progressed to the position of camera operator.

In 1988, Pei relocated to Los Angeles to pursue a cinematographic career, and wound up shooting his first feature — *Masque of the Red Death* — for B-film maven Roger Corman's Concorde Productions. He then ventured into the world of music videos, photographing such varied artists as Amy Grant, Liza Minnelli, Glenn Frey and Duran Duran. Pei took another stride forward as director of photography for the Lifetime Cable Network series *Veronica Claire*, which earned him a Cable ACE Award. Pei has since shot numerous mini-series, most notably *Streets of Laredo,* for which he won an ASC Award; *Stephen King's The Stand,* which earned Pei an Emmy nomination; and *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All (Part 2),* which garnered another ASC nomination.

Pei has also served as cinematographer on numerous episodes of Fox-TV's urban cop drama *New York Undercover.* His feature work includes *Watchers II, Howling VI* and *Panther,* which won the Silver Panther Award at the Locarno Film Festival. Pei has two upcoming features slated for release next year: *Run for the Dream — The Gail Devers Story* and *Overnight Delivery.*

Schnitzler Becomes Associate Member

Peter K. Schnitzler, president and CEO of Panavision New York, was recently inducted into the American Society of Cinematographers as an Associate Member. A native of Newark, New Jersey, he has been involved with the motion picture industry for three decades, and has worked for Panavision New York for the past three years.

In 1967, Schnitzler was hired as the sole employee of the newly-formed equipment house Ferco, where he handled all aspects of the firm's camera, lighting and sound inventory. By 1975, the company had grown to over 25 employees, and Schnitzler was named a partner and president.

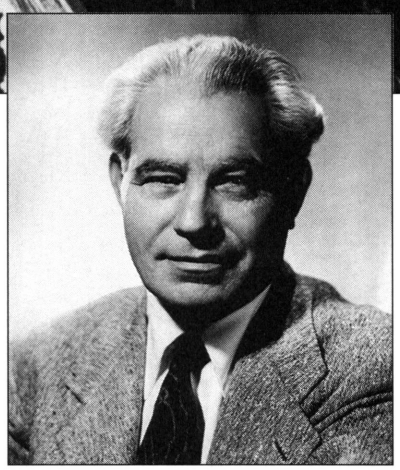
By 1987, he had sold his shares of Ferco. In March of 1988, he was retained by Arriflex as the president and CEO of their subsidiary, Camera Service Center. Hired to turn the company around and bring it up to Arriflex's standards, he eventually transformed it into a leading equipment rental house.

In January of 1994, having brought together an investment group which included Panavision, Schnitzler purchased General Camera, the Panavision and Chapman dealer in the greater New York area. The company was renamed Panavision New York, and Schnitzler now serves as its president and CEO.

Schnitzler's additional professional involvements in the film and television businesses are numerous. In 1993, he was named a Pension and Welfare Trustee of Local 817 Theatrical Teamsters Union. That same year, he also became an associate with Production Partners, a group that includes representatives from all of the industry's New York-based unions. In addition to both the New York City and State Film Commissions, Schnitzler has donated both time and money to further the organization's goals to promote the film and television business in New York. He is also a long-standing supporter of Women in Film's New York chapter.

Schnitzler has also taught classes at New York University, Columbia and the New School for Social Research, working closely with Sol Negrin, ASC. He currently resides in New Jersey with his wife, Cheryl.

— Lisa Sibert



Inset: Nicholas Musuraca, ASC.

In this scene from RKO Radio's *The Stranger on the Third Floor,* a harried John McGuire encounters a scarf-wearing Peter Lorre among the shadows. Produced in June 1940 at a cost of $171,192, the picture was directed by Boris Ingster, written by Frank Partos and photographed by Nicholas Musuraca, ASC. It is the first example of a truly indigenous American film style now called film noir (a designation that wasn't coined until 1946). *Stranger* emerged a year before *Citizen Kane* and *The Maltese Falcon,* three years before *Cat People,* four years before *Double Indemnity,* and 11 years before *Sunset Boulevard.* Yet it has all the elements of full-fledged noir, including moral ambiguity, hovering fear, menacing shadows and angular POVs, dark streets, precarious stairs, unexpected noises — the works.

It's ironic that French cineastes christened a film style that is so resolutely American. Inasmuch as the French also gave us the "auteur theory," it's hardly surprising that they gave directors all of the credit for the style. Some American writers noted the influence of authors such as Raymond Chandler, Cornell Woolrich and Dashiell Hammett. Since visual style is the most tangible aspect of the form, cinematographers should have gotten more recognition.

Recently, cinematographer John Alton belatedly received richly deserved praise for his contributions to the film noir look. When a single individual earns such recognition, however, there often follows an impression that one man alone is responsible for the style. Alton assuredly was one of several creative directors of photography who contributed importantly to noir art in the mid-1940s, but he was not alone. Some of the others were John Seitz, ASC *(This Gun For Hire, Double Indemnity, The Lost Weekend* and *Sunset Boulevard);* Gregg Toland, ASC *(Citizen Kane);* Arthur Edeson, ASC *(The Maltese Falcon);* Joseph LaShelle, ASC *(Laura and Fallen Angel);* Woody Bredell, ASC *(Phantom Lady* and *Christmas Holiday);* Milton Krasner, ASC *(Woman in the Window* and *Scarlet Street);* Norbert Brodine, ASC *(Kiss of Death);* and Russell Metty, ASC *(Touch of Evil).*

Musuraca was probably the most influential of all, though. The look of *The Stranger on the Third Floor* is a virtual preview of Val Lewton's 1943-46 productions at RKO, the first and four others of which were photographed by Musuraca. His noir vision dominates *Cat People, Curse of the Cat People, The Fallen Sparrow, Ghost Ship, The Seventh Victim, Bedlam, Deadline at Dawn, The Spiral Staircase, Out of the Past* and *The Locket.*

— George Turner

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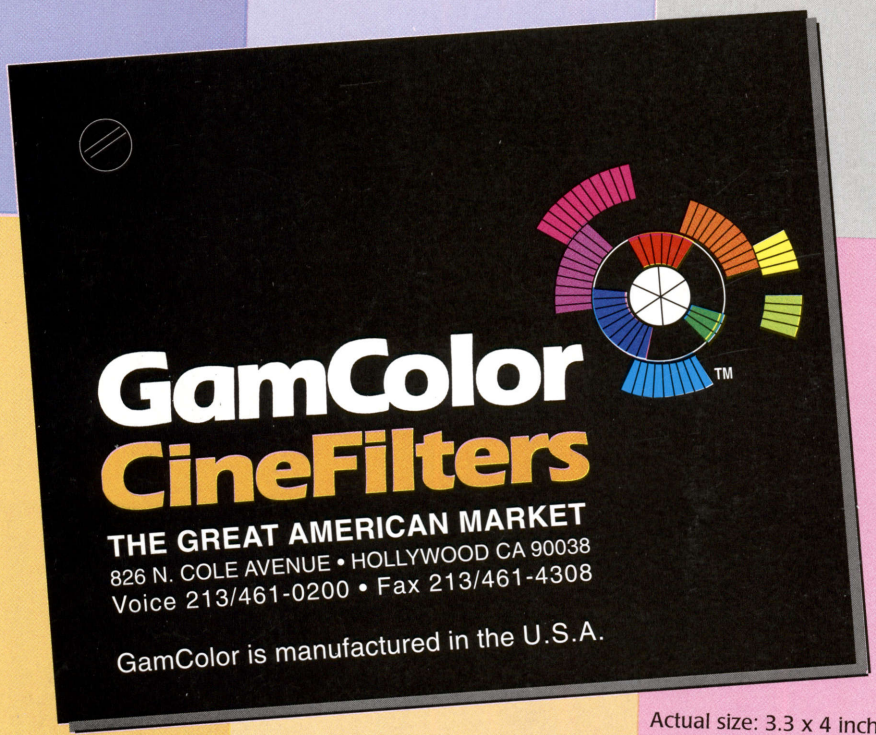
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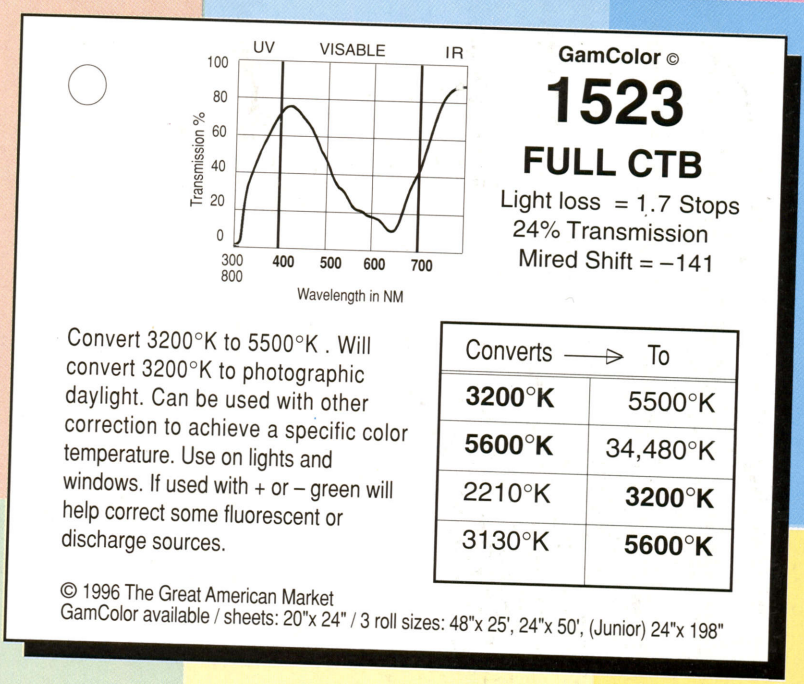

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